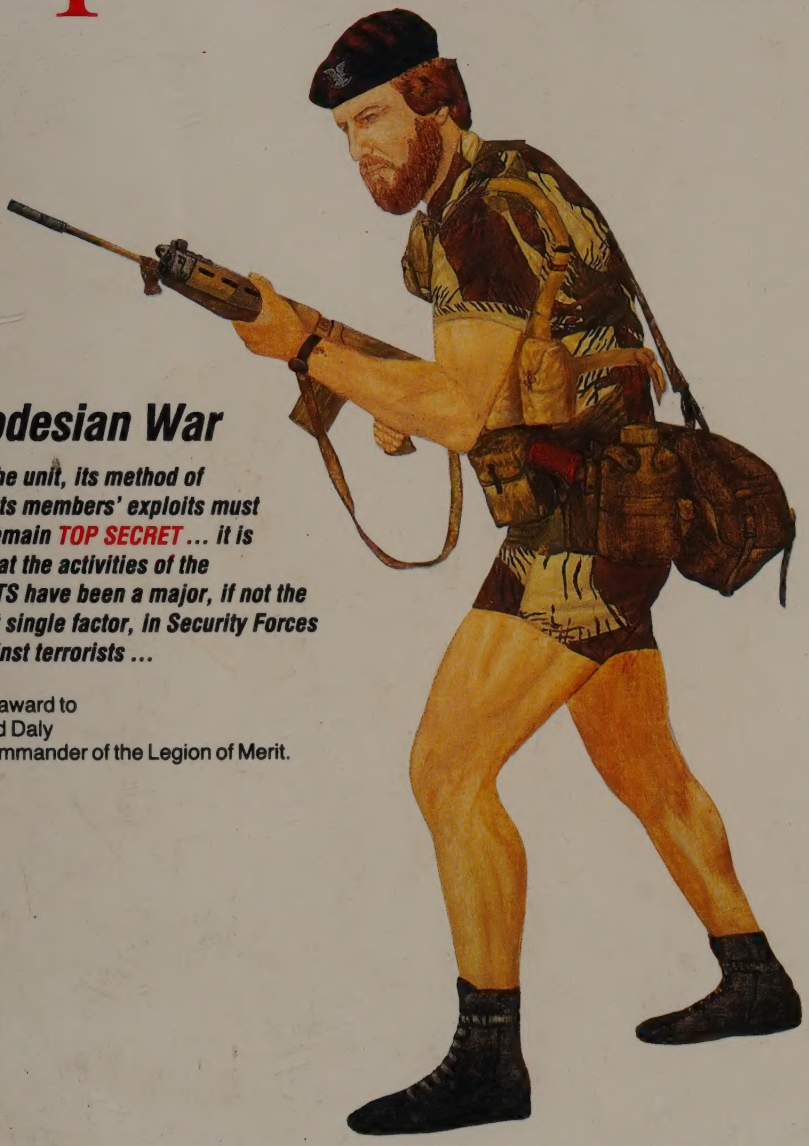
Selous Scouts
Top Secret War



The Rhodesian War

... the role of the unit, its method of operation and its members' exploits must of necessity, remain TOP SECRET ... it is indisputable that the activities of the SELOUS SCOUTS have been a major, if not the most important single factor, in Security Forces successes against terrorists ...

From citation of award to
Lt. Col. Ron Reid Daly
of the CLM – Commander of the Legion of Merit.

Lt.Col. Ron Reid Daly
as told to Peter Stiff

This is the story of the Selous Scouts Regiment of Rhodesia which was formed in 1973, and abolished without formal benefit of disbandment, when Robert Mugabe's ZANU party took power after the British supervised elections in 1980.

Its purpose on formation was the clandestine elimination of ZANLA and ZIPRA terrorists, both within and outside Rhodesia. Their success in this field can be gauged by the fact that Combined Operations, Rhodesia, officially credited them with either directly or indirectly being responsible for the death of 68% of all terrorists killed within Rhodesia during the course of the war . . . losing less than forty Selous Scouts in the process.

While the Regiment was in being, they earned an incredible number of honours and awards, gaining the first of only two Grand Crosses of Valour ever awarded, one Commander of the Legion of Merit, seven Officers of the Legion of Merit, nine Silver Crosses of Rhodesia, twenty-nine Bronze Crosses of Rhodesia, ten Members of the Legion of Merit, five Defence Meritorious Medals, eighteen Military Force Commendations, four Meritorious Conduct Medals and one Medal for Meritorious Service. A total of eighty-five awards.

It is normal in Regimental histories for a roll of honour of the dead sustained by a Regiment to be included, as well as a list of persons to whom medals were awarded, but this has not been done in this book. Not due to lack of respect for the honoured dead, or because former Selous Scouts do not wish to salute their heroes, but for the more simple and germane reason of fear of reprisals by former terrorists against men who served in the Selous Scouts or their loved ones, particularly former African Selous Scouts. It is for the same reason that some former officers and men appear in these pages under a *nom de guerre* and why the faces on some illustrating photographs have been blanked out.

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THE PRESS RAVED ABOUT THIS BOOK:

The exploits of the SELOUS SCOUTS will ever be a reminder of the courage of individuals and an example of esprit de corps that ranks amongst the finest in military history . . . *Natal Mercury*

The SELOUS SCOUTS became the toughest and most efficient killing machine in Africa . . . a fascinating and well illustrated account . . . *The Star*

It is a soldier's story about soldiers, so it is lacking in heroics but not in heroism . . . uncompromisingly honest . . . *Daily Despatch*

Its members consisted of some of the finest guerilla-fighting men in the western world, unconventional in many ways, disregardful of parade-ground discipline, unorthodox in their dress, yet a force so tightly knit in the face of danger that those who knew anything about them could only marvel . . . *The Citizen*

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DUST JACKET DESIGN AND COVER PAINTING — FRANCIS LATEGAN

Selous Scouts
Top Secret War

C1. The Selous Scout. Picture reproduced from oil painting by Francis Lategan.

Selous Scouts

Top Secret War

Lt. Col. Ron Reid Daly
CLM, DMM, MBE.
as
told
to
Peter Stiff

London & Johannesburg

Books by Peter Stiff

THE RAIN GODDESS
TOMMY GOES HOME
THE ROAD TO ARMAGEDDON
SELOUS SCOUTS - TOP SECRET WAR

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For the Selous Scouts . . .
particularly for those who died in the fight

also

For Sally Stiff,
a very special and lovely daughter

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Scores of people, many of whom have asked to remain anonymous, have given freely of long periods of their valuable time, in some cases days on end, to recount their experiences and have willingly produced and made available, to assist with the writing of this book, hundreds of precious documents, personal momentoes, personal files and photographs.

It is a debt which can never fully be acknowledged, for without their unstinting help this work would not be the definitive history that it is.

Amongst those who assisted, listed in alphabetical order, and showing their ranks in Rhodesia, were the following: Lt. Col. Garth Barrett MLM (SAS), Major Tim Bax (Selous Scouts), Det. Insp. John Birch (BSAP, SB), Lieut. Ben Botha (Selous Scouts), Capt. Michael Broadman SCR (Selous Scouts), Capt. Dale Collett SCR MFC (Selous Scouts), Sgt. Major Willie Devine (Selous Scouts), Sgt. Sally Ferguson (RWS attached Selous Scouts), Lieut. Bruce Fitzsimmons OLM (Selous Scouts), Lieut. Chris Gough OLM (Selous Scouts), Lieut. Chris Grove BCR (Selous Scouts), Supt. Winston Hart (BSAP, SB), Sgt. Wally Insch (Selous Scouts), Lieut. Mike Kerr BCR (Selous Scouts), Sgt. Major Charlie Krause BCR (Selous Scouts), Major Neil Kriel OLM (Selous Scouts), Capt. Alan Lindner MLM (Selous Scouts), Sgt. Major Peter McNeilage SCR (Selous Scouts), Capt. Basil Moss MCM MFC (Selous Scouts), Supt. Vic Opperman (BSAP, SB), Supt. Keith Samler (BSAP, SB), Capt. Andy Samuels BCR (Selous Scouts), Capt. Chris Schollenberg GCV SCR (Selous Scouts), Capt. Peter Stanton (Selous Scouts), Major Boet Swart OLM (Selous Scouts), Lieut. Piet van der Riet MLM BCR (Selous Scouts), Sgt. Major Willie van der Riet MLM (Selous Scouts), Lieut. Billy Wiggill (RLI), Major Colin Willis SCR BCR (SAS), Sgt. Major Peter Wilson and Det. Chief Insp. Henry Wolhuter (BSAP, SB).

An important acknowledgement is to Walton Imrie and Michael Spilkin who were jointly responsible for persuading Lieut. Col. Ron Reid Daly that the story of the Selous Scouts was one which had to be told.

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Foreword

This is the story of the Selous Scouts Regiment of Rhodesia which was formed in 1973, and abolished without formal benefit of disbandment when Robert Mugabe's ZANU party took power after the British supervised elections in 1980.

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Generally too, throughout this book the fighters of ZIPRA and ZANLA are called terrorists when being referred to from a Rhodesian Security Force context . . . not to create controversy but because terrorist or terr is what they were called by the Rhodesians during the war, and to call them anything else would create a false historical perspective.

Nevertheless, it is accepted that all terms from terrorists, terrs, guerillas, boys-in-the-bush, freedom fighters, sons-of-the-soil or cardres mean one and the same thing and are interchangeable, according to taste or viewpoint held.

To avoid confusion, splinter groups and the occasional name change of African terrorist organisations have been ignored, the terms ZANU/ZANLA and ZAPU/ZIPRA being used throughout.

PART 1

Before the Beginning
1972/1973

In the early hours of the 21st December, 1972, all was quiet at the Centenary homestead of Marc de Borchgrave, a prominent tobacco farmer in that area of rich farmland perched amidst granite kopjes above the escarpment of the Zambezi River.

Suddenly, the still night was disturbed by the discordant chatter of AK rifles and a wild scatter of shots sprayed the brickwork of the homestead and shattered the glass in several windows . . . then that was it. The ZANLA terrorists did not press home their attack, but after those brief thirty second bursts, beat a hasty retreat into the surrounding bush.

The household, now very much wide awake, the children sobbing in terror, took cover as Mr. de Borchgrave tried to raise the alarm on the telephone, while Mrs. de Borchgrave attended to the minor wounds of one of her children. His heart sank for the line was dead . . . the terrorists had cut it.

Sure the terrorists were still biding their time, waiting to kill them, the family stayed in concealment, Mr. de Borchgrave ready with a loaded rifle. Then, after a while, they decided the terrorists had gone, so Mr. de Borchgrave sidled out of the homestead and ran two miles across country to tell a neighbour and raise the alarm. He dared not use his car as he was afraid the terrorists might ambush it . . . they had not laid ambush . . . but they had buried a mine in his entrance road, so he was fortunate.

Security Forces soon reached the scene and set to their tasks with their renowned dour efficiency. Other than the attack on the homestead and the mine planted in the road the terrorists had fired the store on the neighbouring farm.

The de Borchgraves moved in with their neighbour, Mr. Archie Dalgleish of Whistlefield farm, until the Security Forces had finished their forensic examinations at the homestead and until the damage was cleaned up and were thus unfortunate enough to be present when the terrorists struck another farm . . . this time Whistlefield farm. The luckless Mr. de Borchgrave suffered minor injuries as did yet another of his children. Again the attack did not have to be beaten off, for this time, as with the first, the ZANLA attackers having ineffectively hit, very effectively ran.

However, shortly after the attack, a Security Force vehicle responding to the Whistlefield alarm, detonated a landmine . . . one European soldier died and three others were wounded. Then, in a further landmine incident, another three soldiers were wounded.

The Security Force communique put out over the Rhodesia Broadcasting Corporation ended . . . 'an increase in terrorist activity can be expected.'

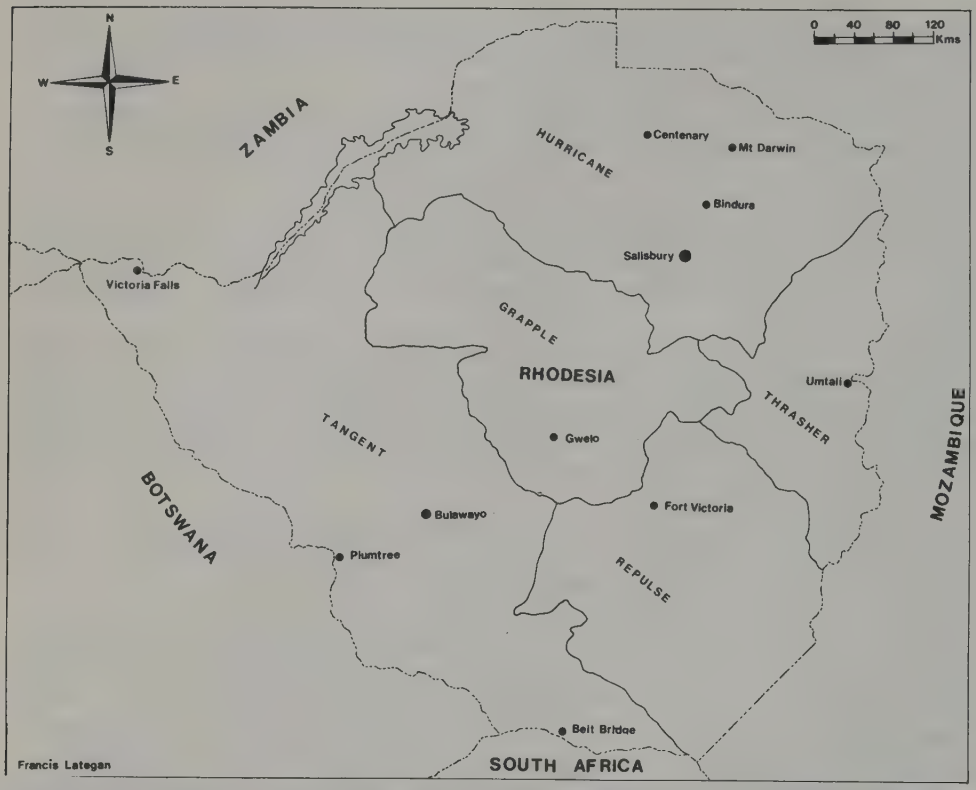
Most Rhodesians accepted the news philosophically. There had been attacks before . . . there would be attacks again. There was little additional, only the two landmine blasts which was an obvious escalation, to indicate this terrorist incursion was any different to previous ones . . . but it most definitely was.

All anti-terrorist operations were given code names, which they retained from the time the presence of terrorists in an area had been noted, or from the time an attack occurred, until the last of the terrorists were finally mopped up . . . which, until then, had been the inevitable and never-failing end to all operations. And so, routinely, the next name at the top of a list of preselected names was deleted and circulated to those units involved.

Hurricane, was the code name . . . it was to prove an ominous choice and was destined in finality to become Rhodesia's own particular wind of change. There would be no final mop-up in

this one, which would only conclude seven years and many thousands of lives later when the war ended after the British-supervised election brought Robert Mugabe and his ZANU to power as the first black Government of the newly named State of Zimbabwe.

For the first time the Rhodesian Security Forces were faced with a seemingly insoluble problem . . . after carrying out their attacks the terrorists had not gone to ground in bush-camps in uninhabited areas where they could eventually be tracked down . . . neither had they gone to ground in inhabited areas where information from the local population to the Police or Special Branch had indicated their whereabouts. This time there was nothing. No tracks . . . no information . . .



L1. Map of Rhodesia showing the boundaries of the Rhodesian Security Force's operational areas as they were at the end of the war. *Hurricane* was the first operational area which came into being in December, 1972.

It was clear the terrorists were well entrenched and hiding out amidst the tribal population of the African areas surrounding Centenary . . . also, that they had merged with the people . . . and none of the people, or very few, were going to come forward with information as to where they could be located.

It was clear they were going to take some winkling out.

How had the new alarming war situation in Rhodesia come about?

The answer was complacency and lack of vision.

After the 1967/1968 infiltration of Nkomo's ZIPRA had been heavily defeated by the Rhodesian Security Forces, the hierarchy of both the Police and the Army had been jubilant but few of them . . . other than going on an occasional *suffer with the men in the field* jaunt, when they donned crackling-fresh camouflage uniforms, along with their blue or red brass-hats, and helicoptered out into the field to collect salutes from the lads who'd been doing the fighting . . .

had any personal field experience of what had gone on, other than from reading the morning sitreps.

Because the operational men in the field had soundly beaten the ZIPRA terrorists that time . . . and because, information-wise the Police and the Special Branch had always managed . . . although sometimes by the skin of their teeth . . . to stay clearly on top . . . they thought it would always happen. Unfortunately, they didn't consider how, because the problem wasn't immediately on their doorstep and having once closed their eyes and seen things disappear, they no doubt thought that if they kept them more firmly closed . . . for even longer . . . things would likely improve even more satisfactorily.

On the political front the problem of understanding the cancer of Russian and Chinese communist-backed African terrorist guerilla warfare . . . where if you did not operate early it soon became terminal . . . was even more dismal. Prime Minister Smith himself, had publicly offered gems of considered wisdom like . . . not expecting an African Government in his lifetime . . . nor even in a thousand years, for that matter . . . so it can well be imagined how the lower political echelons of his Government viewed the matter . . . in truth, if they viewed it at all.

Two years before the Altena farm attack was launched things had begun to happen in Rhodesia's north-eastern border area as FRELIMO advanced south across the Zambezi River and the Mozambique war started to spill over into Rhodesia. It showed all the worrying signs too of becoming difficult to contain as tribal affinities and loyalties straddled the border-lands . . . and . . . the border tribesmen certainly had little regard for international boundaries.

To contain the situation the Rhodesian Security Forces, in co-operation with the Portuguese, commenced operations inside Mozambique, for it was clearly not in Rhodesia's interest that law and order should break down in the border areas or that terrorists, FRELIMO or otherwise, should gain a stranglehold on tribal people who had a foot in both countries.

Already too, at that early stage, there had been whispers of a possible tie-in between FRELIMO and ZANLA in Mozambique.

Special Branch knew that large numbers of ZANLA terrorists were being recruited and sent for training in Tanzania and elsewhere . . . and that ZANLA's intention was to escalate the war . . . and it took little to guess that the escalation had to be through Mozambique.

Detective Section Officer Winston Hart, stationed at Bindura, the only Special Branch representative permanently based in the vast north-eastern border area at the time, did his best to gather intelligence . . . he even, against orders, spent time fairly deep inside Mozambique digging up information from the Portuguese.

On the 27th of April, 1970, a Rhodesian Light Infantry Support Commando vehicle, detonated a terrorist landmine inside Mozambique, opposite Mkumbura. The occupants were the first Rhodesian soldiers to be blown up by a landmine . . . a dubious honour indeed.

Corporal Trevor Wentzell, Lance Corporal Len Moorcroft and Trooper Meyer died in the explosion while Sergeant Chris Gough, Trooper Charles Hallows and Trooper Mike Wigg survived, although they were all hospitalised with their injuries.

Later, on the 20th July, 1972, only a matter of two hundred metres from the site of the first explosion, Winston Hart, driving a Special Branch Land-Rover, detonated another one and became the first member of the British South Africa Police to be blown up by one. But, except for a slight ringing in his ears, he walked away unharmed. Two survivors of those explosions, Chris Gough, one day to become a Selous Scout, and Winston Hart, Special Branch . . . were both destined to play important parts in the Selous Scouts' future.

From late 1970 on, it became apparent that ZANLA were definitely out-and-about in Mozambique along with FRELIMO. At this stage no positive proof of their presence had come to light . . . no ZANLA captures by the Portuguese or Rhodesians . . . no dead bodies . . . no confirming documents.

A lot of information had come in through FRELIMO captures who, certainly at the lower levels, felt extreme resentment against ZANLA and indignantly said so.

They felt, and so did the ordinary caught-in-middle Mozambique tribesmen whose life was

continually being disrupted by military operations, that the presence of ZANLA meant the Rhodesians to contend with . . . as well as the Portuguese Army.

Winston Hart and others like Peter Stanton of the Special Branch, Salisbury, Terrorist Desk . . . more usually planted at Mkumbura than Salisbury . . . had been working themselves to a stand-still compiling reports of what was happening in Mozambique . . . but to the top Police hierarchy it was too remote . . . it wasn't going to happen in Rhodesia . . . but everyone at all stages was fed the information . . . even Prime Minister Smith . . . who later denied it . . . but apologised (in private) to Special Branch for the denial.

At that time Special Branch officers like Winston Hart were told they were alarmists.

'Wind in your neck,' one senior officer told Winston.

After his escape from the landmine explosion, he was ordered to stay in Rhodesia . . . he was ordered not to cross the border into Mozambique again.

Information of a ZANLA presence in Mozambique continued to filter into Special Branch . . . none of it confirmed . . . until in March, 1972, Detective Section Officer Peter Stanton heard from a source that there were *comrades* at a FRELIMO base known as Matimbe, close to Nura store in the vicinity of Gungwa mountain in Mozambique.

'You mean *camarada*?' Peter queried.

It should be explained that amongst the tribesmen the FRELIMO were always the *camarada* . . . the Rhodesian terrorist always the *comrade.*

'No,' said the source, 'there are *comrades* there.'

It was clearly vital the Rhodesian Security Forces should have a look at the Matimbe base . . . the Portuguese Army tended to ignore documents when they carried out attacks . . . but to the Special Branch they were life-blood. Yet, the Portuguese had to be handled with kid-gloves for they were very sensitive to any real or imaginary slights to their national pride.

At the next Portuguese Joint Operational Command Meeting held at Mkumbura, Peter Stanton handled the situation with admirable tact.

'We have heard,' he told the Portuguese, 'that ZANLA and FRELIMO are together in a base in the Msengezi area. Can we have permission to go in and sort them out?'

The Portuguese officers looked at each other . . . they didn't even discuss it.

'No,' the senior officer shook his head emphatically, 'we will mount an operation.'

'Oh,' said Peter apparently disappointed, 'we have the Special Air Service here and doing nothing at the moment. Just to give them something to do, could they have permission to carry out some cross-grain patrols in the Gungwa mountain region?'

'Certainly,' beamed the senior Portuguese officer, 'it will help our patrolling effort.'

The Special Air Service, led by Lieutenant Bert Sachse, later a Selous Scout, attacked the Matimbe Base, killing a large number of terrorists and bringing back six sacks full of documents as well as a lot of captured arms and ammunitions.

It was impossible to identify the dead as they were all garbed in FRELIMO uniforms.

The Portuguese army, meanwhile, had tramped abortively around the bush in the Msengezi area without finding a trace of the terrorist camp . . . but honour, to say the least, had been satisfied.

The Portuguese sent an officer over to Mkumbura to assist Peter Stanton in the checking-out of the captured documents, for he couldn't read Portuguese, and a lot of them were in that language.

After days of sorting and sifting Peter found a black note-book in which was written in Shona: 'Go and tell Evenesi that the Zimbabwe boys have arrived. This is a secret, don't tell anyone else.'

Now this was a bonus indeed for Evenesi was well-known . . . he was Evenesi Mashonganidze the founder of one of those almost lunatic-fringe splinter churches which so commonly abound in southern Africa. He originated from Sipolilo in Rhodesia, but had moved with some of his following into Mozambique, just near the now devastated Matimbe base.

It was the direct evidential link binding FRELIMO to ZANLA which Special Branch had been seeking to confound the sceptics, of which there were many.

EARLY DAYS BEFORE THE SELOUS SCOUTS

C2. Pseudo terrorists in the bush. One cooking, with an AK-47 slung, and one on guard with a RPD-light machine gun, 1973.

C3. Pioneer experimental group of Sergeant Andre Rabie, 1973.

C4. The pioneers, Sergeant Andre Rabie (left) and Sergeant Alan (Stretch) Franklin (right), 1973.

C5 The Rhodesian Light Infantry Fireforce – the steely tip at the end of most of the Selous Scouts internal operations. Picture reproduced from oil painting by Francis Lategan

A situation report was radioed to Intell-Salisbury (Special Branch, Salisbury) which said: *'Presence ZANLA at Matimbe base established after contact. Not known if any ZANLA killed.'*

The Special Branch in Salisbury shared the view of the importance of this intelligence discovery . . . but the responsibility for drumming home the warning into the heads of Government did not lie with them, but with the Central Intelligence Organisation, one step up in the *usual channels* ladder.

After they, in their deep experience and wisdom had pondered the implications of Peter Stanton's report, Ken Leaver, acting Director of the Central Intelligence Organisation, wrote back a minute referring to the report and suggested: *'the note-book could have been placed there to mislead us, as ZANLA are very crafty.'*

ZANLA, of course, would clearly have had to have been something much more than just crafty, to have had the ability to have rooted around Mozambique just ahead of the Special Air Service, planting red herrings in FRELIMO terrorist bases . . . just to mislead!

As the year inexorably progressed towards the end, information snippets came to the Special Branch ears regarding ZANLA reconnaissance patrols being conducted from Mozambique into Rhodesia. The name Solomon Mutizwa, *Chimurenga* name Rex Nhongo, began to crop up.

They discovered too that those reconnaissance patrols took care not to stay too long in Rhodesia . . . and . . . until the organisation was ready to move – really ready to move, their men stayed based up in Mozambique to evade detection. They did not, as some accounts would like us to believe, base up for lengthy periods in Rhodesia . . . their orders against this were very strict.

For instance, on one occasion, a fairly well-known ZANLA terrorist, Silas Paul Muwira, (who specialised in murder, robbery and assault and who was later killed by the Security Forces) who held the flamboyant *Chimurenga* name of James Bond, slipped across the border with his AK-47 to settle a personal dispute with a Rhodesian village headman.

The village headman escaped in a hail of bullets, but Muwira was pursued into Rhodesia by Martin Rauwa, the ZANLA Field Political Commissar (destined to die in a contact with the Portuguese shortly after the Altena farm attack) who captured him while he was at a beer-drink. He ordered him to be tied up, then force-marched him to the Chifombo ZANLA base near Mwanjawanthu in Mozambique for punishment.

In October/November, 1972, a large group of ZANLA terrorists, mostly carriers and bearers, entered Rhodesia from Mozambique and walked upstream along the Nyamandombo river and established a substantial arms cache in a boulder-strewn kopje in the Ngarwe Tribal Trust Land north-east of Mtoko.

Detective Section Officer Peter Stanton, together with a patrol of the Rhodesian African Rifles, was taken by a capture to this kopje to be shown a tree used as a *letter-box* by various terrorists and terrorist sympathisers connected with the group. Unknown to the capture or to Peter Stanton, the hill was the site of the main arms cache the Special Branch had heard about and were seeking.

After copying and putting back three letters found in the *letter-box* and after the Rhodesian African Rifles had set up an ambush to gather in any other terrorists who might arrive, a soldier quite accidentally, dislodged a mortar bomb from amongst some dry leaves. A detailed search uncovered a large quantity of communist arms, ammunition and explosives, which was enough to keep the helicopters shuttling back and forth to Kotwa for a considerable time.

By the end of the operation, which stretched over the period immediately prior to Altena, a number of terrorists had been killed and three others were arraigned before the High Court of Rhodesia for offences relating to terrorism, for which they were sentenced to death and later hanged.

They made no secret of what their intentions had been. Their leader, David Hani, made them quite clear to the trial judge.

'We brought all those things,' he said, 'to start a war to kill the Europeans and all those people who support the Europeans.'

Brigadier John Hickman, later to become a Lieutenant-General Commanding the Rhodesian Army, was the Army Commander at the *Hurricane* Joint Operational Command and he came down in favour of using pseudo terrorist teams to break the information deadlock . . . he was, fortunately, a pseudo enthusiast.

When still a major, he had written a paper to Army Headquarters advocating the turning of captured terrorists, and the formation of a unit incorporating them for use in counter-insurgency warfare.

His clearly revolutionary idea provoked considerable Army reaction at the time . . . most of it ranging from scandalised shock from some, to disbelief and outrage from others, that a regular career officer should actually lend his name to such heresy. From a few of the even lesser-thinking Staff officers came little more than a guffaw . . . that good old John Hickman should have pulled everyone's legs so effectively . . . pseudo terrorists indeed!

The Special Branch at the *Hurricane* Joint Operational Command too were in favour of trying the pseudo concept . . . for indeed something certainly had to be done.

From the Special Branch and Criminal Investigation Department point of view, the concept of pseudo operations was entrenched, to some degree, in their method of work . . . approaches, testing the veracity of information from informers . . . the use of informers themselves . . . plants and traps in illicit gold-dealing cases . . . the dressing up of male Police officers as women to trap wanted rapists and muggers . . . testing out receivers of stolen property . . . and the very fact, in itself, that they wear civilian clothes instead of uniform.

Evaluation tests on pseudo work had been carried out in 1966 using both Police and Army personnel, but little came of it . . . for as will be explained later the concept of operation was not really looked into and the successes the Security Forces were achieving at the time raised no real need for it then.

Pseudo operators . . . men posing as the enemy . . . were hardly a new concept, although certainly in the last century and in the first half of this one, it was considered an ungentlemanly and ruffian-like practice, which was why no doubt, the Geneva Convention allowed for a soldier caught wearing the uniform of the opposing side to be tried by drum-head court martial and shot as a spy if convicted.

But the customs of war . . . like attitudes towards war . . . can change . . . and few nowadays would regard the attitude of the Duke of Wellington just prior to the battle of Waterloo in 1815, as little less than astounding.

While waiting for the battle to commence, he and an artillery officer who was at his elbow, found themselves with a mutually clear view of Napoleon in the opposing battle-lines.

'Can I open fire, Sir . . .' the gunner-officer is said to have asked.

'Certainly not. I will not allow it,' replied the horrified Duke. 'It is not the business of commanders to fire upon each other.'

Yet, as unsporting and tricky as it might be to appear in disguise as the enemy, it was effective . . . few commanders could ever deny it.

Early examples of what could be called pseudo operations, can even be found in the pages of the Old Testament. The Trojan horse too might not have been a terribly sporting ploy, but it squirmed the attackers within the gates of Troy after many long years of unsuccessful siege.

In Africa, Shaka, the black Zulu Napoleon tried it, when Zululand was invaded by Soshogane with a twenty thousand strong Ndwandwe army.

Shaka tempted them like a will-o-the-wisp staying always in front and leading them finally when they were tired and hungry into the vast and dripping aboreal canopy of the Nkandhla forest. There, once darkness fell, he infiltrated five hundred of his best warriors wearing the enemy war-dress, into their encampment.

Late in the night, when all was tranquil, they got busy with their fearsome stabbing spears . . . Soshogane's warriors found it impossible to separate friend from foe . . . so to be completely safe they commenced killing each other.

The identifying password of the Zulu infiltrators . . . so they knew friend from foe . . . was perhaps the classic password of the pseudo operator.

'But I am a *real* Ndwandwe.'

In the Ardennes counter-offensive of 1944, the Germans tried it successfully with Colonel Otto Skorzeny (the famed Special Force leader who had rescued Italy's facist dictator Mussolini from captivity in 1943). A special panzer brigade of German soldiers, wearing United States Army uniforms and equipped with captured US tanks and vehicles, was formed to exploit the expected break-through by rushing forward to seize the Meuse bridges between Liege and Namur, while other parties similarly disguised, were tasked to filter through the American lines and spread havoc and confusion in the soft underbelly of the rear echelons.

The complete panzer brigade, which would probably have been devastating, never got off the ground, but about forty Jeep-parties of *American-speaking* German soldiers did infiltrate the lines and all, except eight of the parties, found their way back eventually too.

While on the rampage, they created incredible confusion and panic, shooting up soft-targets and disrupting communications in the rear. Some accounts mention a cool-customer German soldier who took up employment as a Military Police pointsman and busied himself for many hours directing reinforcements down the wrong roads.

The main effectiveness though was not concerned with the things they did . . . but more with the things they didn't do . . . the uncomfortable doubt they created as to whether the man in the identical uniform to yourself . . . was really a friend . . . or was he really a foe?

When the word got around every American eyed every other American they did not personally know with understandable suspicion, fingers tensely hovering close to the triggers of weapons. Searching questions were asked about movies and movie stars, baseball and football stars and the latest league positions in efforts to probe identities which no doubt caused considerable anguish . . . and sometimes even the demise . . . of those unfortunate Americans who were not avid followers of the great demi-gods of sport or the silver screen.

Even General Omar Bradley, the Commander of the United States 1st Army, was not immune as he related in his autobiography 'A Soldier's Story.'

'Three times I was ordered to prove my identity by cautious GI's. The first time by identifying Springfield as the capital of Illinois (my questioner held out for Chicago); the second time by locating the guard between the centre and tackle on a line of scrimmage; the third time by naming the then current spouse of a blond named Betty Grable. Grable stopped me, but the sentry did not. Pleased at having stumped me, he nevertheless passed me on.'

In the Malayan campaign, after World War-2, under the able direction of General Templer, pseudo gangs were introduced into the jungles by the British to combat the Chinese communist insurgents. It was a very successful move too, and became the accepted and obvious . . . and also suddenly respectful . . . way to counteract terrorist insurgents who rarely wore uniforms so couldn't easily be identified, and who were not prepared to sportingly engage the might of the British Army in set-piece battles until decimation . . . as in the peace-time training exercises.

In Kenya the concept was used again with considerable success during the fight against the Mau Mau terrorists of Jomo Kenyatta.

In both the Malayan and Kenyan insurgencies the pseudo gangs were of Special Branch, rather than Army origin, and they were only used operationally on a relatively small scale.

Why the Special Branch rather than the Army? The answer to that was simple . . . it was the type of war being fought . . . a terrorist insurgency – a civil war where no battle lines were drawn. The only people who could have their finger on the information pulse of a civilian population . . . where every next man could be an enemy or an enemy sympathiser . . . was the civil Police force spear headed by the Special Branch.

Military Intelligence could never have tackled the task . . . they did not have any means of being in contact with the country's grass-roots . . . they were geared towards conventional rather than unconventional war tasks.

It was thus left to the Special Branch to piece together the ever-increasing jigsaw pieces of

day-to-day information finds. Who were the insurgents? What were they up to? Where were they being trained? Who was training them? Who was supplying them? Where were their supply routes? Who were the known sympathisers? . . . And so on *ad infinitum.* From this they could compile an information picture of *hot* areas or have the basic ground work information available in a *cold* area which might suddenly heat up. It is then the pseudo gangs would be committed with the prime task of gaining the confidence of the guerilla sympathisers in the hope they would indicate the genuine terrorist who could then be brought to contact and killed.

It was fortunate perhaps that the early decisions to try the idea of pseudo terrorist teams out had come from the *Hurricane* Joint Operational Command officers . . . the men in the front line of battle as it were . . . for had it been necessary for the idea to have been chewed around first at Police or Army Headquarters before being tried out on an experimental basis, it would soon have been swallowed without trace. But even so . . . it was still unofficial and although approved by the Joint Operational Command at *Hurricane* . . . it still lacked the very necessary open approval of certain senior officers . . . assistant commissioners and colonels and above of the Police and Army Staff respectively . . . who knew nothing about its operation, but who could and would obstruct it constantly, as a matter of principle, until the time came for the ZANU cows to come home.

Superintendent Tommy Peterson of Special Branch, Salisbury, with the full approval of the Joint Operational Command, took the initiative on the 26th January, 1973, and formed an all-African pseudo team.

The imperative need for completely fresh and thus uncompromised captures to guide the way into the terrorist heart was not fully appreciated at that time, but it was fully realised that a former-terrorist presence of some sort or another in a pseudo team to add authenticity was a definite must.

The team formed on his instructions consisted of two African Detective Constables, and four former terrorists who had been captured in previous counter-insurgency operations a few years back and who were by then strictly on the side of the Rhodesian Security Forces. One of them, in fact, was a former FRELIMO terrorist who was later to lose his life, as a soldier with the Selous Scouts.

Former terrorists for use in pseudo teams were very hard to find. The pseudo concept was a new one to use. Until then we hadn't needed the turned terrorist . . . we were always on top and on the winning side . . . it was only human that we should have preferred to self-righteously convict them before the courts for offences relating to terrorism and put them behind bars for a satisfyingly long time.

The trouble was those behind bars were pretty soured and their experiences in top-security prisons like Khami, in communities of convicted terrorists, hardly made them amenable, in large numbers, to the idea of assisting the Security Forces.

This team of six men, once formed, was placed under the direct command of Detective Inspector Vic Opperman, of Special Branch, Bindura.

The former terrorists obviously had to be paid and they could hardly become *attested* pseudo terrorists in Government service . . . so they were paid from Special Branch funds, which were unaccountable to the Auditor General for very good and obvious reasons.

This was to set the pattern for payment of the turned terrorists in the future.

After a few days training . . . mostly devoted to the use of communist arms . . . the former terrorists had been fairly sketchily trained in them, to say the least . . . the time came to deploy them in the field.

Then, dressed in captured ZANLA uniforms of communist pattern and equipped with captured terrorist armaments, plus a little red booklet of Mao's thoughts to beef up their cover, they were sent into the Bushu Tribal Trust Lands near Shamva . . . where some information regarding a possible terrorist presence had been received . . . and left there for five days.

The results, although it was still very early days, were encouraging. No one they came in contact with knew of the presence of terrorists in the area, but most people seemed to have been

taken in by their pseudo identities, and a number of tribesmen who were known ZANLA sympathisers were very helpful towards them and the optimistic indication was, that if ZANLA terrorists did come into the area, these people would make good go-betweens by which a pseudo group would be able to make contact with them.

One man supplied them with food at their camp in the bush and stated he knew many places where, if weapons were brought into the country, they could be safely stored. A farm labourer they met assured them he would *never* report their presence to the Police ... the two-man crew and three staff member passengers of a bus belonging to the Murmugwi Bus Company stopped, quickly had a whip round and gave them a two dollar donation in small change ... and then ... wisely perhaps ... enquired, before they drove on, if any landmines had been planted in the road ahead!

Three tribesmen ... including a ZANU sympathiser who had once been the subject of a preventive detention order for subversive activities ... reported the presence of *terrorists*, in the Bushu Tribal Trust Lands, to the Police at Shamva.

This was encouraging too ... subversion there might be ... but it was clear the terrorists wouldn't have everything their own way.

Their next exercise was in the Madziwa Tribal Trust Lands in early February, where information had been received that just after Christmas a group of four terrorists had been fed by villagers living in the area of Denda Hill, in which area they were said to be based up.

The pseudo group received considerable assistance from the tribesmen who clearly accepted their false bona fides.

Again they got no information of an actual terrorist presence ... but they had been there ... so in an effort to sow seeds of discord in the foundation of any future ZANLA network, they accused eight of the most enthusiastic of the ZANLA supporters of being Police informers ... dirty sellouts ... and, after giving them a few sharp clouts, left them tied up to trees.

Not one report regarding the Madziwa happenings came back either officially as a report to the Police ... or through Special Branch or Police Ground coverage sources.

The area was clearly intimidated at the least, or subverted at the worst. It was evidently the time ... as the British had done in Malaya ... to put in a psychological warfare team to re-establish the balance ... but then and as the situation was to remain until the war was nearly ended ... there was no such thing.

Rhodesians prided themselves on being rugged individualists ... not for them that psychology nonsense!

In the next two months ... with the full knowledge and concurrence of the Joint Operational Command at Centenary ... the team was deployed into the area of the St. Albert's Mission ... which later in the year was to achieve infamy when all the African pupils and staff were abducted *en masse* by ZANLA, herded into Mozambique and forcibly sent for terrorist training ... and in the Chinamora Tribal Trust Lands near Salisbury.

While some useful information was gained during these exercises, nothing concrete leading to the arrest or killing of terrorists resulted.

When the results were analysed, it became crystal clear that on-the-ground European supervision of a team such as this was a must. The terrorists were playing heavily on the African people's superstitions ... particularly their belief in messages purporting to come from their spiritual tribal forefathers through the mouths of entranced *swikwiros* – spirit mediums.

There were, of course, *swikwiros* and *swikwiros* ... and naturally, the ZANU/ZANLA organisation pushed the cause of the *swikwiros* who pushed their cause.

Who was the right *swikwiro* and who was the wrong *swikwiro* was an indeed confusing question for the average tribal African.

Should he listen to this one or should he listen to that one? Or, shouldn't he just play it safe, and listen to both?

The *swikwiros* on the side of the ZANLA terrorists were calling for support of the *Chimurenga* War ... others not particularly supportive decided in view of intimidation by

terrorists, it was better to climb on the bandwagon. Those not at all supportive . . . but for the same sound reasons of fear and intimidation, decided just to shut up . . . it was safer.

So, on the face of it the Rhodesian Security Forces were certainly stronger than the terrorists . . . and, even though the gods are invariably on the side of the big battalions . . . the African members of the team, without the moral and aggressively demanding support of a European with them, could not have been immune from the uncomfortable feeling that perhaps the all-seeing eyes of the ZANLA supporting and supported *swikewiros* might, after all, be able to see all . . . including their own pro-Government activities.

Such are the problems of understanding Africa.

Anyway, because of these very real problems, the Special Branch all-African team was left to rest for a while.

While all this had been going on . . . in fact only a matter of weeks after the Special Branch had taken the initiative . . . the Army too had commenced two pseudo teams of their own.

They consisted of two non-commissioned officers of the Special Air Service, who had been attached to the Army Tracking Wing at Kariba . . . obviously both were experienced trackers who were well versed in bush-lore . . . and some African soldiers from the Rhodesian African Rifles.

The senior of the non commissioned officers, Sergeant Andre Rabie, spoke several African dialects with fluency and would often correct African soldiers when they were sloppy in the grammar usage of their own languages . . . much to their delight, for few Rhodesian born whites bothered to learn the languages of their native African fellow Rhodesians. He knew their tribal customs too and he had spent one period of six weeks leave living with the highly primitive Batonka and Vadoma who inhabit the land of the Zambezi River Valley. This tribe, who are fisherfolk rather than agriculturists, still follow, in isolated areas, the uncommon vanity of knocking out the front teeth of their children. This charming habit had originated when the Arab slavers had made their way inland to the Kingdom of Monomatapa, by the Zambezi River route, to trade beads, baubles and limbo for people enslaved by the Varozwi from war-captures or from their subject tribes.

Needless to say, the lack of teeth, and the consequent gappy grins, made the Batonka most unattractive slave potential . . . and even now, the Amazambesi . . . the people of the Zambezi . . . are considered the lowest of the low by both the Shona and the Matabele.

The second non commissioned officer was Sergeant Stretch (Alan) Franklin, a lanky and dedicated soldier, noted for his quick wit and ready sense of humour.

It was clear the time had arrived for a little more overt co-operation between the Special Branch and the Army . . . some joining of hands, as it were.

Detective Inspector Peter Stanton of the Salisbury, Special Branch, Terrorist Desk, was lent to the Army to conduct a course for the Army teams at Shamva . . . using the Detective Constables and the *tame* terrorists of the original Special Branch team . . . to teach them how the terrorists operated . . . how they approached kraals . . . what they ate or did not eat . . . the songs they sang . . . what they said . . . how they set about politicising the people in the tribal villages, and all that sort of thing.

This was not the last mention that will be made of Detective Inspector Peter Stanton . . . nicknamed *The General* . . . in connection with pseudo operations and counter insurgency. In the future he would take on the responsibility of interrogating almost every terrorist, ZANLA or ZIPRA, captured by the Security Forces. Blessed with a phenomenal memory, like a computer bank, there were few recalcitrant terrorists who didn't crumble when faced by him.

'Who are you?'

No answer.

'Ah,' Peter would say, 'I see the serial number of the AK-47 you were carrying was . . . That means you must be . . . you come from Gutu – Chamunorgwa's village. You were trained at . . . We nearly caught you after that contact at . . . Now, listen to me carefully . . .'

Once Peter Stanton's course had been completed, they were deployed, now with the benefit of a detailed Special Branch briefing, which gave them information Military Intelligence couldn't

possibly have ... for their fingers couldn't be on the civil pulse ... no matter how well intentioned they were ... for they didn't have the facilities.

For the first time they had detailed briefing pictures of who the known ZANLA sympathisers were, the ex political detainees, potential link-men with the terrorists and all that useful chitter-chatter that comes from Police and Special Branch sources ... which soldiers normally despise and sneer at as being useless ... but suddenly they stopped sneering.

The other important advantage they had, was the addition to their numbers of *tame* terrorists ... including two very recently captured and *tame* ZANLA terrorists who had elected to fight on the side of the Security Forces.

When ... during Peter Stanton's training course ... the African soldiers first realised former terrorists were to be added to their numbers, they were aghast. Their logic ... which sometimes is not too different from ours ... demanded that all captured enemies should be knocked on the head and killed ... it was only because of the white man's eccentricity, which they unfortunately had to tolerate, that captured enemies were incarcerated in prison ... but to re-arm and keep them shoulder to shoulder with them in a common cause ... that was insanity!

One major problem remained ... the teams were a hybrid creation of the Special Branch and the Army ... but they were still neither fish nor fowl ... they were in fact an orphan ... and no matter how good intentioned people are, and no matter how much they might deny it ... no one wants an orphan.

For, in spite of the incredible enthusiasm of Andre Rabie and Stretch Franklin, they just did not get any positive results. They had brought in a lot of information ... but then so did the Special Branch – constantly ... in fact they bored one sick with their information ... it looked like the pseudo teams were getting just as bad! It was information which led to nowhere.

'Where are the terrorist kills? Just what are those men doing out there anyway?'

Why was there this lack of success? What accounted for it?

It was clearly because at that stage there was no one taking a full time interest in the teams ... they were no one's responsibility ... so they were pushed around from pillar to post ... even if it was not deliberate or intended, which it was not.

The reasons for this were not difficult to find. For administration purposes they fell under the Army and were looked after from that point of view by the Army Intelligence Officer, for the time being at the Joint Operational Command at Centenary, and later Mount Darwin. There were some good officers ... very good officers indeed ... but the key was the word *some,* for they kept changing. The war was new and restricted to one area, so it was not unreasonable that officers kept changing ... everyone took their turn at the *sharp end.*

What applied to the Army clearly too applied to the Special Branch who was responsible for their operational briefing and debriefing ... in effect their tasking too. They were subjected to just as much a turnover of personnel in the operational area as the Army.

Everyone helped ... on the Army side men of the calibre of Captain Dumpie Pierce, Lieutenant Niel Kriel, Lieutenant Mick Graham and others. On the Police side men like Detective Inspector Vic Opperman of Special Branch, Bindura, Detective Inspector Winston Hart, once of Special Branch Bindura, where he had spent three years making himself expert on what was to become the *Hurricane* operational area, but by then of the Special Branch Terrorist Desk in Salisbury, who was spending most of his time in the operational area, Detective Inspector Peter Stanton and a host of other *visiting* members of the Special Branch and Criminal Investigation Department.

With deployments ... which meant taking out or picking up teams by truck in the middle of the night ... a dangerous business now that landmines were being used by ZANLA terrorists ... everyone lent a hand ... be they Army personnel concerned with the teams' administration and welfare, or the Special Branch concerned with their briefing and debriefing.

But this was the trouble ... everyone had other jobs to do ... with the rising tide of insurgency war they were all busy men indeed.

One thing was happening though, fortunately for the war effort, and that was that a very

special relationship of comradeship and work association was developing between Andre Rabie, Stretch Franklin and Winston Hart. Being Rhodesians born and bred, and Rhodesia being a small country, their families were acquainted with each other . . . they had almost grown up together . . . while it was not a blood relationship, it was the next best thing.

Above all . . . each of them . . . was totally determined and dedicated to showing everyone that the pseudo concept of operation could and would work.

The Army then attached a third man . . . Sergeant Peter Clemenshaw . . . to the embryo concept to form a third team, after the necessary training and familiarisation.

Soon, after a period of training, the gathering in of some volunteer Rhodesian African Rifles' soldiers and some *tame* terrorists, his team too became operational.

Three teams now began to plod around various parts of the *Hurricane* operational area . . . all on the lookout for the opportunity to make contact with the terrorists, the fingers of every man itching on the triggers of their weapons, but other than a torrent of information . . . there was still nothing.

They operated in the Mtepatepa farming area, in the area west of Mkumbura, in the Chiweshe Tribal Trust Lands and anywhere else where the hunting was thought likely to be good.

They were briefed at Centenary . . . at Mount Darwin . . . and in the field.

They were debriefed at Centenary . . . Mount Darwin . . . and in the field.

It was becoming routine . . . almost boring.

Because the results of the Army teams had not been particularly inspiring until then, Superintendent Tom Peterson, of the Special Branch, told Winston Hart to reform the original Special Branch pseudo team of four captured terrorists and two African members of the Special Branch. Once done, the team was strengthened by the addition of men from the Police Support Unit and by Inspector Rowen Johnson of Police Mabelreign and it was deployed in two different exercises in the Chinamora Tribal Trust Lands near Salisbury and the Msana Tribal Trust Lands near Bindura, with the full knowledge and concurrence of the Joint Operational Command.

This time, with European supervision, there was a vast improvement on the old team. Little came from the exercise in the way of concrete information which could lead to the killing of terrorists, but the important thing was that a sympathetic Special Branch officer, Winston Hart, who very much knew his stuff, for the first time got the feel of the problems, and the feel of exactly what pseudo work was all about from the point of view of the man in the field, and all importantly . . . what backing that man in the field needed.

On completion of the Chinamora Tribal Trust Land exercises, Superintendent Tom Peterson, instructed Winston Hart to take over, in addition to his other duties, the Special Branch responsibility for the Rabie/Franklin/Clemenshaw teams to give things more continuity.

It was a move that was welcomed by both Winston Hart and the Army members of the teams.

Now . . . with a Winston Hart back-up . . . the teams had valuable back-up indeed.

With Special Branch continuity, things became more organised and professional with all briefings being prepared by Winston from informer information and otherwise, which he constantly gathered in from Special Branch and Police stations in the operational area, to enable him to keep the teams properly posted as to what to expect in the areas they were operating in, in the way of sympathisers to the ZANLA cause and so on. He also took over the major responsibility for the teams' deployment and withdrawal from the field which, as has been said before, was being carried out by a number of different Special Branch, Criminal Investigation Department and Army personnel, who happened to be based at the Joint Operational Command for the time being.

The Special Branch then took over some vacant houses from the District Commissioner in the Mount Darwin village to use as *safe houses,* where the men of the pseudo teams could be housed without breaking security on withdrawal and debriefing, and where Special Branch men performing temporary duty at Mount Darwin could mess.

Amusing incidents occurred almost constantly, particularly when a team was being withdrawn from the field. It naturally became necessary, for security reasons, to get the African mess cook-cum-batman, who looked after the place, temporarily out of the way, while a pseudo team, with blackened faces and in terrorist garb, ducked from the trucks and ran swiftly into the house under cover of darkness.

It became commonplace for the astonished African to be unexpectedly buttonholed when a truck pulled up outside the mess.

'Hey, Samson, go knock up Mr. . . . and borrow some milk.'

'Ah, but boss,' he would say, 'there are three bottles in the fridge . . . and . . .'

'Don't argue with me, Samson . . . go and get some more milk from Mr. . . .'

The puzzled and hurt Samson . . . who always took great pride in ensuring there were sufficient supplies in the mess . . . would depart shaking his head, to knock up Mr. . . . who would probably be sleeping and furious what's more, at being awakened *again* and asked for milk by Special Branch.

When Samson returned he would be faced with a request to cook an enormous amount of steak, eggs and chips, which would be handed to men who would stay completely out of his sight behind closed doors . . . until he departed for the night.

He would see them only the next day, at which time he would also notice the bath . . . an incredibly filthy bath . . . showing a disgustingly thick and black tide-mark . . . which would take at least an hour's hard work to clean off.

It was at this stage that Sergeant Peter Clemenshaw decided he'd had enough of pseudo teams. He had become totally fed-up with the lack of understanding of the team's problems displayed by certain officers and he asked to be posted back to the Army Tracking School at Kariba, from whence he had come.

Now there were only the two old-stagers left . . . Andre Rabie and Stretch Franklin.

In August, 1973, an exercise was commenced which became known as *the long walk,* in which it had been arranged that both Andre Rabie and Stretch Franklin would combine their teams and walk up the Ruya River, as if they were an incoming ZANLA group from Mozambique, and see what the reactions were.

Captain Dumpie Pierce of the Rhodesian Light Infantry, who was giving a lot of assistance to the teams at this time, worked out a system of *frozen* areas for the first time. This was a scheme whereby Security Force units, covering various areas along the Ruya River, would be told to withdraw from those sections at particular times . . . when the pseudo team's arrival there was imminent . . . but they would not be told the reason why. While their areas were *frozen* they were instructed not to operate closer in than four thousand metres along either side of the Ruya River.

The team commenced operation *long walk* and soon afterwards met with their first success . . . they captured a ZANLA terrorist.

Winston Hart made rendezvous with the team in the field and interrogated him in the Kandeya Tribal Trust Lands. A proposition, the pattern of which was to become familiar in the future, was put to him. It was simple and concise . . . he had the option of being handed over to the Criminal Investigation Department, or the Police, for dealing with through the courts as a criminal, for contravening the provisions of the Law and Order (Maintenance) Act for offences relating to terrorism . . . and probably hanged . . . or, he could change sides and work with the Security Forces against his former comrades.

After a short period of big-eyed thought, the capture elected to change sides . . . then and there in the field . . . and he was given back his gun . . . albeit unbeknown to him, with the ammunition made harmless . . . and he continued with the group on their long walk.

It should be stressed that this pattern of things was to be repeated many hundreds of times in the future and, although the ammunition of a newly turned terrorist might be tampered with in the first place, this could not stay tampered with for very long and the sooner he was a fully integrated member of the group, the better . . . and . . . this could only be achieved once mutual trust was established.

So a pseudo group always had to make a hard decision and they had to make it quickly . . . could they trust the ex-terrorist or not? The answer to that question, if in the affirmative, took a considerable amount of moral courage on the part of the team. It meant, in effect, placing their lives in the hands of a former enemy who, having turned once, might very well turn again . . . and kill them.

The expertise used by Special Branch to turn terrorists was undoubted . . . but the cold courage in accepting those turned terrorists on a permanent basis into their ranks by the pseudo teams can only invoke the utmost admiration.

Flight Lieutenant Basil Moss of the Rhodesian Air Force was not a man who was entirely happy with his lot. Being over the age of forty years, although still very fit, he was not someone who would normally be considered for a front-line job at the sharp end of the war.

His particular job in the Air Force, which was strictly a ground one, was concerned with the perimeter security of Air Force bases and it was not to his liking. He was certain he could do something more useful to aid the war effort . . . but no one seemed to want him.

A born Rhodesian, Basil had a fluent command of the Shona language . . . in fact more than fluent . . . if he were placed in a darkened room with other Africans he was totally undetectable as a European.

He spent a lot of his off-duty time studying orders and scheming, trying to worm his way into a more interesting occupation but had met with little success or even interest. Then one day, through the medium of circulars advertising vacancies within the Security Forces, a notice was put out calling urgently for persons able to speak Shona to assist the Special Branch as interrogators.

This appeared to be it . . . what's more it appeared to be an *it* with a status attached. He immediately sat down in front of the battered guardroom typewriter at New Sarum Air Base, and using one finger, hammered out a letter applying for the post.

For several weeks he heard nothing . . . he'd almost given up . . . then out of the blue came a signal. His heart lurched with happiness when he read it. He was ordered to report forthwith to the Joint Operational Command at Mount Darwin. The dress he was to wear, which clearly made plain his new uplifted status with the Special Branch, was civilian clothes.

This was better than any job of guard supervision. African personnel sleeping on duty . . . African personnel with all their incredible stories and reasons as to why they should be granted immediate urgent private affairs leave to go home to visit their allegedly sick close-ones, or attend the *funerals* of their alleged *dead.* This was the life . . . a Special Branch life . . . no uniform but a decent civilian shirt to wear . . . a job where one's African language capabilities could be used to the full.

Happily he packed away his uniform and went off on a shopping trip to fill in the large gaps in his wardrobe of civilian clothes. He shopped carefully getting a new suit, a sports jacket and a number of very expensive shirts.

When the great day of his transfer arrived he dressed himself nattily and carefully in his new sports jacket, while admiring the broad check, and expensive shirt and tie and grey flannels. Then, carrying a suitcase containing the remainder of what he thought he might need, he climbed aboard a milk-run aircraft which duly put him down at Mount Darwin.

To his surprise he was allowed no time at all to settle in . . . as soon as he got out of the fixed-wing aircraft he was impatiently ushered, still carrying his suitcase, into a helicopter which had apparently been awaiting his arrival.

He strapped himself in and it immediately took off. Soon they crossed the Zambezi escarpment and swooped low into the valley, the tops of the trees seeming about to brush the underside of the helicopter . . . like the long seeded ends of grass under the belly of a horse at stretch gallop.

A quarter of an hour later the helicopter dropped down onto the bald top of a kopje which was, apparently, miles from anywhere.

'You're leaving me here?' Basil shouted to the pilot, to make himself heard above the noise of the still moving rotar blades.

'Some guys should be here to meet you,' yelled the pilot cheerfully. He nodded suddenly towards his right hand side, and gave a thumbs-up signal. 'Looks like they're here.'

Basil's eyes followed the pilot's indication and he was startled to see two lanky and spare white men with blackened faces and beards . . . carrying Russian AK-sub-machine guns and standing immobile on the fringe of the bush.

Basil alighted nervously carrying his suitcase and, feeling slightly ridiculous, he ducked to avoid the rotars and ran to join the men who were meeting him. Even that physical effort, in the incredibly humid heat of the Zambezi valley, caused the sweat to start running from his body in rivulets.

The apparitions inclined their faces towards him . . . unfriendly and hostile faces.

'So you're the new guy,' one grunted, 'better follow us, okay?'

Without waiting for his answer or even offering an introduction, they turned and plunged into the bush with long strides, leaving Basil to pause to take off his jacket and then to trail behind them, lugging his suitcase and cursing his totally unsuitable, now rapidly becoming bedraggled, natty Special Branch-type gear.

A short while afterwards he was shaken when a shot rang out. He lumbered forward to catch up with his strange companions, feeling very relieved when he found them kneeling by a dead sable antelope which they had obviously just shot. They were in the process of butchering it.

Basil walked over and put his suitcase down, coming for the first time within reasonable proximity to them. He wrinkled his nose in disgust . . . he couldn't help it. They stank like skunks. He deduced from their general appearance that they were men to whom soap and water was a rare, if ever, luxury. He stood fidgetting, staying up-wind to avoid their rank body odours, for some twenty minutes while they butchered the carcass.

Suddenly, to his complete surprise, one of the men heaved a bloody hindquarter into Basil's arms.

'Carry this,' he was ordered.

Although highly indignant Basil had no option but to hang onto the bloody meat once he had taken it. In any case, he had no opportunity to complain because before he knew it, his two new but surly friends had taken off once more at a smart gait.

The route followed by the two bearded white giants was as straight as a die . . . they took no accounts of boulder-strewn uphills or downhills, deep dongas, or thick *wag-'n-bietjie* thornbush which painfully fish-hooked his flesh and snagged his new clothes.

It was not long before Basil, ladened with his suitcase and struggling with the burden of the awkward and heavy, bloodied and fly-blown sable antelope's hindquarter, who was fresh from a desk-job in Salisbury, was sweating profusely while his clothes were almost rotting from his body.

Finally, after a nightmare journey which lasted until after nightfall . . . Basil actually collapsed and was unsympathetically dragged to the crest of the last kopje en route . . . a camp, deep in the bush, was reached.

One glance at the people awaiting them with such expectation caused Basil's impression of having stepped into a terrible nightmare to soar to new heights of fantasy, for staring at him face to face, were eight of the most villianous-looking black terrorists he had ever imagined.

Basil had arrived . . . he had also, although it was still unknown to him, arrived at what was to become a Regimental home in which he would serve for many years to come.

Somewhere there had been a snarl-up.

Basil, instead of going to his new job as an interpreter for the Special Branch at the Mount Darwin Joint Operational Command, had been mistaken for a new volunteer to join Stretch Franklin and Andre Rabie.

Stretch and Andre, on seeing this incredibly *old* man of at least forty, dressed in the most totally unsuitable gear for the work they knew he was about to undertake, were convinced he was

merely a *waster* out to try his luck. The walk they had taken him on was especially designed to teach him a lesson, before he begged on his knees for an immediate return to his parent unit.

However, it was not to be, for Basil was made of sterner stuff, and after taking stock of the situation, he decided his language talents might well be used in the almost unbelievable scene into which he had stumbled.

And so he stayed . . .

After Basil Moss's startling introduction to the field of pseudo work he was withdrawn from the field for training and Andre and Stretch continued on their walk up the Ruya River.

While the walk was in progress, a vehicle driven by Inspector Ward, the Member-in-Charge of the Police at Centenary, detonated a landmine and Mrs. Ward was killed.

An immediate and intensive manhunt was launched to hunt down the culprit terrorists and to help to achieve this, Andre Rabie, who had often tracked in the Centenary area, and was familiar with the country there, was peremptorily withdrawn, albeit temporarily, from the pseudo team in the hope he might be able to use his considerable expertise to track down the gang responsible.

Then, on the 31st of August came the first successful contact resulting in kills . . . the first of the thousands which were to follow.

Stretch Franklin's group were working up to the area of the Mkaradzi Mine on Arcadia farm, some ten to twelve kilometres from Mount Darwin Village and on the border of the Chesa African Purchase Area. The name Mkaradzi Mine, although it might conjure up a picture of a headgear standing astride a mine shaft of some hundred or so metres in depth, with the symphony of a five stamp mill rising and falling with the wind, it was not so. Like many other mines marked on the maps of Mashonaland it had been mined long ago in the early years of the century and, after the gold-bearing reef had petered out, it had been abandoned. All that remained to show its very existence was a caved in shaft, protected by barbed wire, a few prospecting trenches and the dumps of waste from the gold-bearing reef after it had been hammered to powder during the extraction process.

There were some more recent signs of activity at the mine though. European prospector, Len Koënig, an octogenarian who had seen better days before he had virtually turned native in his declining years, had been employed by a Concession farmer who had re-pegged the claim, to treat the old dumps with cyanide to recover any vestiges of gold which might have escaped the mercury trap of the James' Table when the ore had been originally processed. He had become a familiar sight in Mount Darwin for, once a week, he would walk to the village to replenish his supplies which invariably included a bottle of brandy which he would partly sup on the bottle-store's veranda and partly while on the long walk home through the bush.

It was said he had once been a partner of Orlando Baragwanath . . . a strapping giant of a man who had left both his names . . . Orlando and Baragwanath . . . as a legacy to the Copperbelt in what is now Zambia . . . and . . . who had lost a brother at Filabusi in the earlier *Chumurenga* war of 1896.

Tom Bulpin had written a book about him: 'The Trail of the Copper King.'

Then, a few weeks before Stretch and his men walked into the area, the terrorists had come one night and had pushed old Len Koënig from his rude pole and grass hut, after commandeering his meagre possessions . . . an old torn shirt, a pair of socks which had seen better days, a blanket, a pot . . . and marched him barefoot up the road for fifty metres where one of the terrorists who was carrying an RPD-light machine gun . . . the leader always carried the RPD . . . emptied a full drum of ammunition into the old chap's head and upper chest . . . it was overkill . . . sadism personified.

There had been little left of the old man to recognise when Winston Hart and other Detectives went to the murder scene to investigate . . .

Inspector Dave Perkins of the Police Armaments Branch picked up only a few of the cartridge cases bearing the characteristic ejection marks of the RPD, for examination by comparison microscope. They matched other cartridge cases held in little plastic sample bags back in Salisbury which had been collected in the Chesa area on many different occasions. The terrorist

who had wielded that RPD so willingly had murderously scythed a swathe of innocent victims with it ... tribesmen, African businessmen, successful African farmers, school teachers ... anyone who was an enemy of the people ... anyone who had not immediately accepted ZANLA's icy nod that *politicising and re-education* was necessary for the people.

Stretch knew about this terrorist and his gang for the murder details had been written on the brief Winston had given him ... but the terrorists' names were unknown.

Nearby the mine, clustered against a hill within the adjacent Chesa African Purchase Area, were the huts of a subsistence farmer. As was usual in those parts most of the male members of the family were away working in town ... Salisbury. Their women, as was also the custom, remained at home ... at the farm or the village. It was their lot in life to cultivate the lands, to plant the mealies, water the vegetables and with the help of their male offsprings, herd the cattle, the sheep and the goats.

The testing had become a familiar routine.

Stretch Franklin sent some of his men into the cluster of huts to test out the farmer. They never asked if there were any other comrades in the vicinity ... they never said they were ZANLA comrades themselves. They let this be assumed by their appearance and by the Russian weapons with the banana magazines they were carrying.

The African farm owner was not there so they spoke instead to three women busily pounding the shucked mealies into meal with a long wooden pestle in a mortar hollowed from a tree trunk, in the manner as done in primitive societies almost since time had begun.

'Where is the *Mudala* ... the old man ... the owner ... we wish to see him.'

The women shook their heads. He was away in the lands checking that the cattle had not wandered too far while being herded by the often lax young boys.

'We will be returning later and, when we come, we expect food to be ready for us ... good food.'

Two hours later, by now after dark, the pseudo terrorists of Stretch Franklin returned to the farm to collect the food. The farmer was waiting for them and he greeted them with considerable joy and enthusiasm, fussing about them like a mother hen while they gathered up the food and the pots and the blankets which they were going to take with them back to their base camp for the night.

'There are other comrades in the area,' he said suddenly, 'I could arrange for you to meet them. I am sure they will be glad to hear of your arrival.'

The leader of the pseudo group expressed doubt, although he was glad the darkness concealed his hands which were uncontrollably shaking with excitement.

'I was not told that other freedom fighters would be in this vicinity.'

'Yes, there are, there are,' the farmer hastened to assure him.

They stayed talking, the food getting cold, while the pseudo terrorists allowed themselves to be persuaded by the old man to meet up with the other ZANLA terrorists in the area, two evenings hence. Although they agreed ... they insisted on a condition ... the farmer himself had to be present.

'It looks good,' Stretch told Winston Hart at a rendezvous in the bush where they secretly met. 'I'm sure we're onto the bastards.'

For the next two days the women at the African farm were busy brewing beer for the great occasion that was to come ... for the great occasion which would bring the family forever into the annals of *Chimurenga.* But good African beer, *wawa* or *doro,* needs seven days to mature, so the process was hastened by the addition of yeast bought from a local store. The result was *skokiaan,* the quick-brew beer brought about by the white man's laws designed to curb unlimited brewing of African beer.

After dark on the day of the rendezvous, a group of ZANLA terrorists led by Kennedy Zwamutsana, as every bit as excited as the farmer, moved in their arrogant inexperience ... an experience which told them that everyone they pointed their guns at would unresistingly die ... to the rendezvous agreed upon.

There was no real caution, for in those days the Freedom Fighters were the Freedom Fighters, while the Security Forces were the Security Forces . . . the gulf between them was unmistakably enormous and there was no common meeting ground. No one could be mistaken in deciding who was whom.

Besides all that . . . Kennedy Zwamutsana did not doubt he could look after himself . . . with his RPD-light machine gun he was invincible.

Kennedy and his men moved forward, seeing the visitors in a huddled group ahead of them. He motioned his men to stay where they were and moved cautiously forward to meet a man who detached himself by a few paces from the other group.

'Ah,' said Kennedy delighted. He recognised the other man instantly for they had once been together at Lithuli Camp near Lusaka, but they had not seen each other for a very long time.

He held out his hand in greeting . . . away from his RPD-light machine gun . . . then, he paused in frozen bewilderment as the formless huddle in front of him reformed quickly into a skirmish line revealing a tall man in the centre . . . clearly a white man with a blackened face.

A grenade arched over his head and dropped into his men behind him, just as the AK's of the pseudo group of Stretch Franklin opened fire in a synchronized harsh tattoo which Kennedy only vaguely heard for at least five bullets ripped into his flesh, effectively smashing and destroying bones and organs and he dropped to the ground as if poleaxed.

His men fled, leaving behind the body of their leader shallowly breathing out the last few breaths of his life, and the bodies of the other terrorists sprawled dead in the dust.

Stretch Franklin walked slowly forward, turned the still form of Kennedy Zwamutsana over with his foot, then bent and picked up the RPD-light machine gun.

The murder of old Len Koënig and the murders of all those other innocent people had been avenged . . . those far-sighted people who had been scorned for believing in the pseudo concept, had been vindicated.

The follow-up the next day by the Support Commando of 1-Rhodesian Light Infantry, the standby force at Mount Darwin, found the body of another terrorist some hundred metres away from the scene of the contact and the spoor leading away showed clearly that at least two others had been wounded and were haemorrhaging badly, while escaping the contact.

Another terrorist was captured by a Security Force patrol some twenty five kilometres away from the contact area the next morning. He was walking along the main Darwin to Rusambo road, his SKS rifle slung over his shoulder as if he were in the safety of Mozambique, his eyes staring fixedly ahead in terror-stricken shell shock.

The corpse of another terrorist from the group, who had died afterwards from his wounds, was found six months later buried in a shallow and hastily excavated grave after information was received by Stretch from a capture.

After his resounding success, Stretch Franklin and his team were withdrawn for rest and recreation while Andre, who had not, unfortunately, drawn any luck in his efforts to track down the landmine laying gang at Centenary, came back with all due haste, demanding he be put straight back in the field.

To say he was piqued was an understatement . . . he was furious . . . he was outraged . . . after all his hard work and determination he had been pipped at the post by his close friend and partner, Stretch Franklin. He was happy for Stretch . . . he was happy for the pseudo concept, but . . .

'I'm going back out there,' he announced to Winston Hart. 'What's more, I'm not coming back in until I get myself a terrorist . . . and, I don't care how long it takes.'

It must be said that Andre was an incredibly keen member of the pseudo team and was willing to try all types of things to make himself more effective and had even experimented, unsuccessfully, using various chemicals in an attempt to dye his blue eyes to brown and thus give himself more of the outward appearance, when blackened up, of an indigenous African.

On the 13th September, he achieved a limited success in discovering an arms cache consisting of a few stick grenades and some tins of ammunition after receiving information from a local . . . this made him even more keen and determined to carry on until he achieved a terrorist kill.

Special Branch officers like Detective Inspectors Vic Opperman and Peter Stanton and others were, all the time, feeding information to Winston Hart which could be useful to the pseudo teams. Every man involved . . . be they Special Branch or Army . . . were hungrily interested in seeing that the pseudo teams should get further positive results . . . the keenness of Andre and Stretch was totally infectious.

Early in the morning of the 16th September, Vic Opperman phoned Winston Hart from his office at Special Branch, Bindura.

'Listen, Winston, are the guys in Shamva? I've had a report from a source . . . seems there are terrorists in this area . . . up to the north of Shamva. Can you check up?'

Winston immediately phoned the Joint Operational Command at Mount Darwin and asked Captain Pat Armstrong to make contact with the team . . . the Joint Operational Command Centre had radio communications with them.

Captain Pat Armstrong called Andre up on the radio and he immediately replied, giving his location which, when checked on the map, appeared to be about ten kilometres away from where the terrorists had been placed by the source.

Vic Opperman, when he heard this, immediately requested permission from Pat Armstrong at the Joint Operational Command, to carry out a follow-up with the Rhodesian Light Infantry in an attempt to locate and bring to contact the terrorists concerned.

Pat Armstrong was disturbed and uneasy and he wanted to be absolutely certain. To reassure himself he again called Andre on the radio and told him he was ordering a Rhodesian Light Infantry follow-up on the terrorist sighting and asked him, with some intensity, if he was absolutely sure of his ground position.

'Affirmative,' Andre replied.

Pat Armstrong still could not shake off his uneasiness. He was aware that Andre's team . . . because of his keenness to get a terrorist kill . . . was overdue for withdrawal, so he tried to persuade him to come out.

'Negative,' said Andre emphatically, 'I'll stick around out here because those guys might head in my direction, and if they do, I'll nab them . . . I'll think about coming out later . . . if I don't get them.'

His words landmarked the beginning of a tragedy.

Andre, when asked his position, had seen that visually he was nearby a small dam constructed on a minor stream. He had glanced at his map and immediately picked up a dam . . . the only one shown on the map in that area . . . but what he did not twig, was that there were two dams . . . the one nearby him was not marked on the map . . . which had been compiled before the dam was built.

The position he passed to Mount Darwin was out by ten kilometres.

He was using a *shackle-code* for communications . . . a military coding system randomly altered by a change of numerical sequence . . . difficult to break but demanding on the encoder, particularly in adverse conditions with papers balanced on one's knee in the bush.

His particular shackle-code was not the common one in use by the rest of the Security Forces in the *Hurricane* area . . . but a different one due to the secrecy of his work.

When passing his position to Captain Pat Armstrong, Andre additionally not only made the error regarding the dam, but also made an encoding error. This mistake compounded his original error . . . but also made the first more believable.

The grid reference notified by Andre, seemed a reassuringly reasonable place for him to be at, when his last reported position was taken into account.

In spite of himself, Pat Armstrong still couldn't shake off his unease . . . still it was ridiculous . . . he had checked and double checked . . . he squared himself up mentally and did what he had to do. He picked up the telephone and called Bindura . . .

A Rhodesian Light Infantry combat team was cleared to move into the suspect area to check things out . . . they were Support Commando, my old command . . . Detective Inspector Vic Opperman went in with them.

Andre and his men were relaxed . . . they knew the Rhodesian Light Infantry had come in . . . but they were ten kilometres away.

'Let's just hope the lads chase some terrorists our way.'

One of his African non-commissioned officers who had shared Pat Armstrong's unease had queried their position on the map . . . he had thought Andre had got their position wrong . . . but Andre overruled him, confident in his undoubted ability to map-read.

Then, one of his group mentioned he had seen some fish swimming in the clear waters of a pool in the river below the dam wall. Couldn't they try to net them . . . fish would make a refreshing change to a monotonous diet?

Andre promptly gave permission and strolled the short distance to the pool with some of the men. He laid down his rifle and removed his camera from its case, intent on getting a snap shot of the fish being netted.

Framing the standing reeds at the river's edge was an open stretch of sand which had been banked high by the river when it last came down in spate . . . the machine gunner laid his Russian RPD-light machine gun on the sand.

There were no fish visible in the pool, so Andre's men went into the water to cool off.

No one saw the men of the Rhodesian Light Infantry as they came around the bend.

Vic Opperman was in front with the tracker . . . they both simultaneously saw the RPD-light machinegun . . . its Russian identity starkly unmistakable against the sandy backdrop . . . movement and laughter came from the reeds.

The drill in the bush is simple and uncomplicated . . . if you wish to stay alive . . . and if you wish to kill the enemy . . . open fire!

An immediate fusillade was directed at the movement in the reeds and Andre Rabie died . . . he didn't stand a chance. The men with Andre scattered in the confusion of the contact, and fortunately none of them were killed.

Afterwards, many people blamed themselves for Andre's death; Pat Armstrong . . . he should have re-checked the position; Detective Inspector Vic Opperman . . . he should have questioned the informer in greater depth; the Rhodesian Light Infantry tracker, for it was his bullets which had killed Andre and it was Andre who had taught him his skills as a tracker . . . an impartation of knowledge which had been destined to cause his death.

The truth . . . Andre's death was caused by his own errors in reading the country and his maps . . . tragic but starkly true . . . and the gods of war are harshly unforgiving of those who make errors.

No one other than Andre was to blame . . . but Rhodesia lost a very fine soldier as a result.

There were many who were inconsolable at Andre's death, for he was a much loved person . . . one of the most distraught was a recently turned terrorist . . . a man who, until a few short weeks before, had been one of Andre's deadliest enemies.

Such is the futility of war . . . a war in which although Andre had died . . . still ground on . . . and which would claim its horrible dues of many more lives in the future.

Basil Moss was deployed, with his new group, into the Centenary area on the 22nd of September . . . four days later on the 26th, his group killed their first terrorist in a contact.

The results were beginning to come in thick and fast.

On the 3rd of October, the pseudo teams gained a new European recruit . . . Lieutenant Michael Bromley . . . a Territorial Army officer on call-up, whose civilian employment was with the Department of Wild Life.

He was put with Stretch Franklin to gain experience and learn his trade . . . who, at that time, was hot on the heels of a supposedly large gang of some forty ZANLA terrorists, and who was, at one stage, only a day behind them, but as is so often the case in this type of work, they lost them . . . or perhaps they hadn't existed in the first place!

On the 8th of October, Michael Bromley, who clearly had a flare for this type of work was given his own team and a further new recruit to the concept to teach, Lieutenant Robin Hughes, also a Territorial Army officer on call-up from the Department of Wild Life.

FIRST PSEUDO TEST COURSE: OCTOBER, 1966

1. *Right to left:* Lieutenant Alan Savoury, unknown, Bill Crabtree, later Deputy Commissioner of Police, Gerry Rawlings, later General and Chief of Staff of the Army, Lieutenant Spike Powell, later to die in the second Vicount Airliner shot down by ZIPRA, Senior Assistant Commissioner, Oppenheim, OC, CID, and prime mover on the pseudo concept of operation and Major General Keith Coster, Army Commander at the time. The other men in the picture were SB, SAS or CID personnel undergoing pseudo terrorist evaluation course.

2. Special Air Service and Special Branch personnel in pseudo dress.

3. *Left:* Before the Scouts, the Security Forces relied heavily on trackers. The sole patterns of communist supplied footwear, especially the figure of 8 pattern on the centre shoes, became very familiar.

4. *Right:* Detective Section Officer (later Superintendent) Winston Hart, British South Africa Police Special Branch, was involved with the pseudo experimental teams from inception – later attached to Selous Scouts. Here seen with wreck of landmined Land-Rover he had stepped from unscathed the day before, in July, 1972.

5. Pioneer experimental pseudo group of Sergeant Stretch Franklin, 1973, (3rd from left top row) Flight Lieutenant Basil Moss (far right top row).

They were deployed into the Mtepatepa farming area of Centenary and it was not long before his group had nuzzled their way into the confidence of a local ZANU sympathiser, and ascertained that a group of ZANLA terrorists were operating in the area.

On the 18th October, the African pseudo operators were invited to visit the contactman's village after dark, to discuss the question of a meeting being set up with the resident ZANLA group.

They sat down to a meeting in the village, their backs against some rocks, and the tribesmen plied them with beer.

While the beer-drinking and discussions were in mutually amicable progress, Michael Bromley and Robin Hughes stealthily made their way into the village, covered by the darkness and concealed themselves on the far side of a cattle-kraal, only a few metres away from the huddle of villagers and pseudo operators.

Suddenly . . . and totally unexpectedly . . . the group of real ZANLA terrorists they had been negotiating to meet, walked into the village.

There was a face-to-face confrontation between the pseudo terrorists and the real terrorists who clearly realised something was amiss.

The pseudos knew immediately they would not be able to carry it off, so they swung up their guns and opened fire first. There was a sharp and decisive firefight in which two ZANLA terrorists were killed and another wounded and captured . . . the rest got away.

After it was all over, Lieutenant Robin Hughes who had placed himself on the far side of the cattle-kraal was dead . . . tragically killed in the cross-fire. The situation had been a welter of confusion and Robin, who had the reputation of being a matchless rifle shot had, it was thought, stood up in the centre of the contact area to help his men, and was unluckily killed by a stray bullet.

Basil Moss, Mike Bromley and their team were dropped off by helicopter just inside Mozambique late one evening. They walked through the night for about ten kilometres until they were nearby the border on the Mozambique side where they camped down for the remainder of the night.

The next morning, at first light, they crossed over into Rhodesia and made camp for the day.

Some men were sent to approach the kraal-head at a nearby village which turned out to be a very successful approach.

He was very pleased to see the pseudos . . . he was delighted in fact . . . and also very drunk.

After getting into conversation he agreed that there were indeed comrades in the area . . . comrade Wasiya Gumbo and his men were the resident group.

The pseudos shared his pleasure and asked if arrangements could be made for a meeting to be set up for the following day.

He agreed and asked the group to follow him, which they did for the rest of the day, while Basil and Mike trailed some distance behind and . . . although they were within sight . . . the kraal-head merely assumed they were reticent comrades who did not wish to speak. He did not catch on or suspect they were Europeans.

When they reached a particular place in the tribal trust lands he asked them to base up in an area of jessie bush while he went on ahead to find Wasiya Gumbo, so he could make the final arrangements for the groups to meet.

An hour later he returned and confirmed a meeting for the next morning was in order and that he would be sending a guide . . . an African youth . . . who would take them to the meeting place . . . he couldn't come himself.

The next morning as promised, a young African boy arrived at the encampment and they all set off together with Basil Moss and Mike Bromley again trailing unsociably far behind.

The youth led the group to what was probably one of the most perfect ambush positions that could be imagined . . . it was where four cultivated fields junctioned, which meant the terrorists had perfect cover while the pseudos . . . no matter which way they approached . . . were exposed and in the open.

Both Basil and Mike caught up with the rest and crouched down on their haunches, as is the African custom . . . the two Europeans worrying because they had been perspiring for so long . . . afraid their sweating had caused streaks in their black make-up.

A man suddenly appeared from the thick undergrowth carrying an AK-47 sub-machinegun.

'Wasiya Gumbo,' breathed the youth excitedly.

Just then another terrorist with an RPD-light machine gun stood up . . . in retrospect Basil Moss was sure that he was doing nothing sinister . . . he merely wanted to have a look to see what was going on.

The African pseudo team-leader, however, thought otherwise and he immediately let rip with his AK and Wasiya Gumbo went down.

A stern firefight . . . from both sides . . . immediately erupted . . . and one of the pseudos, a Rhodesian African Rifle soldier, was shot below the knee . . . and then the terrorists fled.

The Fireforce concept had not yet, of course, been developed, so all that happened was a helicopter came to casavac the wounded soldier, while the rest of the group were uplifted and taken back to base for a debrief, together with the body of Wasiya Gumbo and some useful documents which proved beneficial in future operations.

The urgent need in pursuance of the pseudo concept of fighting the war . . . a need which would remain until the war ended . . . was the constant re-supply of newly captured terrorists who were willing to change to the Government side. It was only newly captured terrorists who could keep the teams up-to-date with the constantly changing picture of what was happening in the enemy's camp to enable us to get, and then stay ahead.

In those early days it was particularly fraught with difficulty, as the policy of the Police, starting from the Commissioner at the top, and totally backed by the Government of the land, was to capture or kill as many terrorists as possible.

Those terrorists captured, in pursuance of that policy, obviously had to be tried before the courts . . . the more terrorists killed or being convicted and incarcerated in prison, the better it was for public morale.

In retrospect, against what we later learned and what pioneers like Winston Hart, Stretch Franklin, Andre Rabie and the other select band of assistants, both Army and Special Branch, were trying to achieve, this might have seemed a pig-headed and short-sighted policy, but in fairness, it was not.

Nobody asked men to become terrorists and they took their chances of retribution at the hands of the law when they did . . . long terms of imprisonment and even the death sentence were provided for offenses relating to terrorism.

It follows then, that the idea of just letting men off who might have already maimed or murdered people in terrorist attacks . . . stuck very firmly in the collective Rhodesian gullet.

The pseudo experiment, of consequence, was frowned upon by a wide number of people in official circles . . . and they blocked many attempts to circumvent court appearances of captured terrorists and were totally anti the concept of re-arming them and putting them back in the field against their former friends.

Many . . . but certainly not all . . . of the lower echelons of the Special Branch and the Criminal Investigation Department working in the operational area, understood the desperate need for new captures to be *turned* for the pseudo teams . . . for many . . . but again not all . . . were working closely and helping at many levels with the deployment and the briefing and debriefing of the teams.

Unfortunately, at the higher levels within the Duty Uniformed Branch, the Criminal Investigation Department and at the puzzlingly influential upper rank strata of the Administrative Staff at Police Headquarters . . . where some officers with no duty Police experience at all, directed some aspects of policy . . . there was an unreasoning inertia to the idea.

Because of this, those in the field sometimes had to take it into their own hands to do what had to be done.

In October, four captured ZANLA terrorists were detained in the cells at the Mount Darwin Police station . . . all had been remanded before a magistrate and were pending trial before the courts in terms of the Law and Order (Maintenance) Act, for terrorism offenses.

Two of them were clearly of no use to the pseudo teams, but the other two, having been interrogated by not only the Criminal Investigation Department in connection with the crimes for which they were being charged, but also naturally, by Winston Hart from a routine intelligence gathering point of view, seemed likely material.

The problem was, as both had been remanded for appearance in court, they had somehow to be got out of official custody. He could hardly adopt the simple procedure of taking them back before the magistrate and withdrawing charges, because permission for this would have been refused outright by the Criminal Investigation Department and Policy hierarchy . . . and even by others at a lower level.

So Winston concocted a plan with the help of his African personnel.

He arranged for all four of the terrorist prisoners to be transferred from Mount Darwin to Bindura by truck . . . Winston would drive. Bindura was a bigger station and consequently more secure from the point of view of holding important prisoners . . . and . . . the magistrate's court proceedings could be held at Bindura more conveniently.

The two terrorists selected by Winston and his staff had both expressed willingness to change to the Government's side when he had questioned them.

The plan was that on the way to Bindura . . . when they were only a mere five kilometres outside of Mount Darwin, just at the foot of Mount Fura in the unpopulated area around Thackaray farm . . . the two about-to-be-*tame* terrorists would ask their African Special Branch Sergeant guard if Winston would stop the truck so they could relieve themselves in the bush.

The Sergeant (naturally!) would agree and call out for Winston to stop.

Winston, being an understanding Special Branch officer, would stop, the Sergeant and the two prisoners would alight, walk into the long grass, on the pretext of modesty, leaving the prisoners not scheduled for escape still locked safely behind mesh in the back of the truck.

Then, when the Sergeant gave them a friendly wink, the *escapees* would rush into the bush, half-heartedly chased by the Sergeant for some two hundred metres until both pursued and pursuer were out of sight of the truck.

'They've escaped!' the Sergeant would shout as he tore off into the bush. 'They've escaped!'

Winston, to add authenticity, would then loose some gunshots into the air and add his own shouts to the hue and cry . . . strictly for the benefit of the two remaining prisoners in the back.

Having closed the curtain on this highly satisfactory theatrical performance, Winston would then drive off . . . on the face of it to get assistance . . . while another Special Branch truck cruising behind, would pick-up the African Sergeant and the former prisoners, and the pseudo teams would be richer by the addition of two valuable recruits.

It was essential the two prisoners remaining in custody really believe the escape was genuine, so that once they were detained in Bindura Prison, the story of the escape would seep through the grape-vine to the *escapees'* home tribal trust lands, which were local, so the tribesmen there would still genuinely believe they were real terrorists, to aid the success of future operations.

When D-day came, the four prisoners were duly loaded into the back of a Land-Rover with the Special Branch Sergeant acting as guard, while Winston and a Special Branch Detective Patrol Officer got in the front.

They drove out of Mount Darwin Police camp in a leisurely fashion and coasted downhill soon reaching Thackaray farm area at Mount Fura's base . . . where things were scheduled to start happening.

But . . . nothing happened . . . nothing at all . . . no one called out for permission to relieve himself . . . Winston slowed his truck . . . to almost walking pace . . . and waited . . . until they were almost clear of the uninhabited area.

He clearly couldn't carry on like this . . . the situation was rapidly becoming ludicrous.

He applied the brakes, stopped the Land-Rover and waited.

The Sergeant in the rear took the hint and glared nastily at the prisoners.

'Anyone for a pee?'

The prisoners looked at each other shyly.

'I do,' volunteered two men almost in unison.

'Not you,' snarled the aggravated Sergeant . . . the wrong prisoners had volunteered.

The right prisoners looked at each other nervously, then hesitantly . . . very hesitantly . . . raised their hands.

'Two of the prisoners wish to get out and relieve themselves, *Ishe*,' announced the Detective Sergeant blandly.

Winston breathed a sigh of relief.

'Good,' he said lamely, 'I'll keep the truck stopped then.'

The Sergeant and the feet-dragging about-to-be freed prisoners, climbed from the back of the truck, which was then re-locked.

Both terrorists . . . clearly of the impression they had been tricked and were about to be shot . . . had to be almost dragged . . . the Sergeant held one by each arm . . . until they were in the relative concealment of the long grass.

'Now run,' snapped the Sergeant angrily, shoving them into a reluctant stumbling run.

Winston Hart who had been keenly observing the proceedings . . . with the utmost disbelief . . . waited . . . until they were about ten metres away from the Sergeant. Neither, judging by the weak-kneed jog they had adopted, seemed set to break any athletic records.

'They've escaped!' shouted the Detective Sergeant convincingly.

'They've escaped,' echoed Winston thinly.

He leant out of the window and fired some shots into the sky to add his seal of authenticity to the escape.

Then, to Winston's horror, as soon as they heard the shots, the escapees stopped dead in their tracks, shot their hands into the air in a clear gesture of surrender, and started jogging back to captivity.

The Sergeant doubled forward, cuffed them a couple of times and pushed them into some bushes to conceal them.

'Well,' announced Winston loudly, although very weakly, 'I think we had better drive off and get some help so we can recapture those escaped terrorists, don't you?'

His Patrol Officer companion nodded numbly . . . he was almost beyond words.

Having made his announcement, Winston quickly slipped the Land-Rover into gear and drove off . . . hoping the remaining prisoners had been taken in by the really appalling ham acting.

Afterwards . . . almost unbelievably it seemed at the time . . . information filtered back to the Special Branch which indicated the escape had been accepted as a genuine event, which Winston concluded could only have been due to the prisoners inside the truck, having a very restricted external view because of the mesh.

The two *tame* terrorists in question proved extremely valuable and were to eventually be responsible for a number of ZANLA terrorists being captured or killed.

The remaining problem was, that things did not look terribly complimentary so far as Detective Inspector Winston Hart was concerned. It was clearly not expected that men of his rank and seniority should allow prisoners . . . particularly important terrorist prisoners . . . to escape from custody.

'What the hell was Hart up to?'

Reports were called for from lofty levels and he was obliged to explain what had happened.

Gilding the lily, more than a little, he related a tale of derring-do, how he and his men had done everything they could to foil the escape, but had failed due to misfortune and the unexpected turn of *speed* the *escapees* had put on from a standing start.

For a time the paperwork flew thick and fast and it became clear through the hazy miasma thus generated, that the Officer Commanding, Criminal Investigation Department had the

cycloptic view that Detective Inspector Winston Hart of Special Branch should be charged *for allowing a prisoner to escape* in contravention of the Police Act. Even the Officer Commanding, Special Branch, frowned on Winston's conduct, as he, in his elevated position had not been party to the happening ... and was thus not aware of the true story ... and ... he would, in all probability, have refused to allow it if he had been.

But ... all bad and uncomfortable things ... as with all good and comfortable things ... must finally come to an end ... and ... after Winston had been hauled up on the carpet and severely dressed down, the matter ran out of steam and was dropped ...

PART 2

The Beginning – the Selous Scouts are Formed 1973/1974

While all this had been going on I was taking little more than a passing interest in new developments within the Army and only the normal interested concern of a Rhodesian in the day to day progress of the war.

I had completed twenty years of pensionable Army service and was on leave pending my retirement on pension. Until six months before I had been commanding the Support Commando of the Rhodesian Light Infantry and had been as much engaged in the war as the next Rhodesian soldier.

Then, I had tendered my resignation . . . I had had enough . . . it was time to become a civilian again. I was a Captain who had worked his way up through the ranks the hard way . . . from Trooper to Regimental Sergeant Major, and then from Lieutenant to Captain. It was clear I had no further to go in the Regular Army career stakes . . . which . . . only goes to show how sometimes one's life has many unexpected twists and turns which help, I guess, to keep a man on his toes.

Before flying out with Jeanie, my wife, for a holiday in Portugal, General Walls, the Commander of the Rhodesian Army, had called me up and attempted to persuade me to stay on in the Army, but I was not open to persuasion . . . I was determined to go.

In November, 1973, when my leave pending retirement was nearly finished, and I was on the razor edge of being a civilian again, and while still considering some tempting offers of employment where one worked the puzzling hours of 8.00 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. I was summoned to General Walls' office once again.

The General and I had first met when I volunteered for service in Malaya in 1951 and he was commanding the Rhodesian contingent. We had always got on very well together . . . in spite of a trait of brash outspokenness on my part which had occasionally landed me in hot water during my service life.

When a Lieutenant Colonel, General Walls had been the Commanding Officer of the Rhodesian Light Infantry, and I had held the honour of being their first Regimental Sergeant Major.

After exchanging pleasantries, I warily sat down. I guessed he was going to ask me again to stay on in the Army . . . why else would he have sent for me . . . but I had no intention of acquiescing.

General Walls is a direct man . . . direct in his speech and manner . . . and on this occasion he did not beat about the bush, but came straight to the point. He told me the war was not going well . . . information I was no stranger to incidentally . . . because I well knew the general problems regarding the lack of intelligence that was coming in to the Security Forces.

He then mentioned Andre Rabie's tragic death . . . killed by our own men . . . what an awful waste . . .

Then he dropped his bombshell . . . a delayed action bombshell . . . a booby trap . . . his face betrayed none of his inner feelings.

'Do you know what he was doing?' he asked casually.

I, unthinkingly picked up his booby trap.

'Tracking, I guess . . . well you know. Good guy . . . about the best European tracker I've come across . . . I've heard on the grapevine he's been doing something with captured terrorists . . .'

'Yes,' said General Walls, 'he was running a pseudo group . . . a counter gang . . . the way the British did when we were in Malaya. They did it in Kenya too . . .'

I sat in front of him, almost rooted to my chair with interest, as he gave me a detailed rundown on all that Andre Rabie, Stretch Franklin and the others had been doing. Of course, it would work . . . it was working already . . . needed proper handling that's all.

He then went on to stress the enormous potential of properly organised pseudo groups . . . the effect they could have on the outcome of the war.

The Prime Minister, Ian Smith, who had followed the activities of the experimental groups, was totally sold on the idea, and he had ordered a regiment be formed specifically to carry out pseudo work. Moreover, it was to be formed as quickly as possible and would have a priority rating over any other unit or matter pending in the Rhodesian Army.

'Ron,' said General Walls with a quiet intensity, 'I think you are the right man to raise and command this unit.'

I was intrigued by the offer . . . I found it very tempting too and I was certainly very flattered. But I had already made a firm promise to Jeanie . . . I would leave the Army . . . I wouldn't change my mind . . . why hadn't the Army made an offer like this before I made the decision to go?

'No, Sir,' I said with real regret. 'I'm afraid I have to turn it down, but I very much appreciate the offer being made.'

'Ron,' General Walls said relentlessly, going on the offensive, 'things are not going well for us in the operational area . . . and, the way the Portuguese are handling things in Mozambique is likely to make it even worse for us. It is vital we gather effective intelligence on the terrorists which will enable us to kill them . . . Special Branch are simply not capable of giving us this intelligence on their own. It is no use, at this hotted-up stage of the war knowing where the terrorists were yesterday, or where they might be tomorrow . . . time is not on our side . . . we must learn where they are now . . . this very instant . . . so we can start killing them and get the upper hand. We have the means to kill them . . . the Security Forces . . . but not the means to find them. I sincerely believe you can achieve that. The formation of this unit should have been done long ago . . . I repeat, time is not on our side . . . yesterday is too late. You are a Rhodesian . . . a Rhodesian born and bred. It is your duty too as a soldier, you must take on this task for your country.'

We looked at each other for several moments, each busy with our own thoughts. I could sense the tremendous strain he was working under. I knew in my heart of hearts that he was right.

It *was* my duty to accept . . . but, would Jeanie see it the same way?

'I will speak to Jeanie, Sir, and give you an answer tomorrow.'

'The job carries the rank of Major.'

When I arrived home Jeanie looked at me with deep suspicion . . . she was clearly not in a mood which could be brushed off with banter.

'What happened . . . what did he want?' she demanded.

I gave her a bland synopsis, avoiding going into too much detail, for as with the legendary bog-wood of Ireland . . . my ancestry warned me against saying too much.

'Cheek . . . he really has cheek . . . I hope you told him what to do . . . you've done more than your share already. What about all the others who just polish the seats of their pants in Army Headquarters? Let them get out in the bush . . .'

They were very wifely and certainly very womanly words to say, and I doubt I was the first soldier who'd had them said to him . . . particularly by a woman who very much knew her man.

She was very close to tears . . .

I took her in my arms and, without saying I was going to accept . . . although I knew I was . . . clumsily explained my concept of duty to my country . . . and what the challenge of forming a new regiment . . . particularly one based on an entirely new concept . . . meant to a professional soldier like myself.

Yet, in spite of what I was saying and the way I was saying it, I knew by the look in her eyes that she knew the truth.

Certainly duty . . . being a Rhodesian . . . played an important part . . . but the other part . . . the professional soldier bit, was even more important.

I couldn't disguise what I was ... I was like an old cavalry horse pricking up his ears and pawing the ground at the first sound of the bugles.

I had tried to appear a reasonable man ... a man who really *wanted* to be a civilian ... a man who was only reasonably weighing up the pros and cons of a job offer ... a job which he would probably refuse ...

I had not, however, fooled Jeanie one little bit.

Her eyes went big and she burst into tears.

'When you see Walls,' she sobbed, 'and accept his blasted offer ... tell him from me ... I think he is a despicable bastard.'

Early the next day I reported back to Army Headquarters to see General Walls.

'Well?' he asked quizzically.

'I accept the command, General,' I said, adding almost as if it were an afterthought, 'Jeanie asked me to pass on a message.'

We were a small army and he had met Jeanie many times.

'Oh,' he said raising his eyebrow, 'and what is that?'

'She said I was to say you are an utter bastard.' I gave him a half grin.

'Ron,' the General laughed, 'if you had been in my position, what would you have done?'

'Precisely the same as you, Sir,' I said.

Having accepted the command we then got down to business, and General Walls told me in greater detail of the proposed organisation and command-structure of the new unit.

I learned it was to be called the Selous Scouts ... an armoured car regiment in the old Federal Army had once borne the name. It was an honourable name in the African context ... a very honourable name indeed.

Frederick Courteney Selous, English born, had first landed in Africa in 1871, at the age of nineteen and was to become the best remembered African hunter of them all. He had that special something ... a certain charisma.

Rider Haggard, after meeting him once, immortalised him as Alan Quatermain, the tough hero of his *King Solomon's Mines,* and Wilbur Smith, at a later day, put a touch of him in Sean Courteney, his hero of *When the Lion Feeds.*

A President of the United States of America, Theodore Roosevelt, was proud to call him a friend and even the German Kaiser, Wilhelm 1, extolled him to his country's youth as an example of toughness they should emulate.

The Matabele said that even the elephants couldn't kill him.

He was one of the earliest pioneers of Rhodesia, hunting elephant and spending many long years of his life in the bush there, long before the settlers came.

He was a noted shot ... an incredible hunter ... an awesome bushman and ... a man of letters too, for he wrote several books.

In 1914, at the outbreak of World War-1, he went to the Army recruiting office, but they shook their heads and turned him down ... he was sixty-two ... he was too old.

But it was not long before the will-o'-the-wisp German forces in East Africa started to pin-down an enormous number of British and British Empire troops. Their enemy was not only the Germans ... it was fever too ... and the bush ... and the unforgiving enormity of Africa.

They desperately needed men who knew the bush and someone at the War Office in London thought of Selous ... the big game hunter, and ... in spite of his age this time, they called him up and commissioned him a Lieutenant.

Then, in a skirmish near the Rufiji River, which would never have been remembered except for the death of the man it caused, he took a stray bullet in his head.

They buried him where he fell, out in the wilderness of Africa ... the wilderness that he had loved ... the wilderness that he had worked and lived in, and his grave lies where they buried him at the foot of a great baobab tree in a Ugandan Game Reserve which, to this day, bears his name.

Yes, it was indeed an honour my Regiment should be called after a man of the calibre of Frederick Courteney Selous.

I noted the formal facts relating to the Regiment's formation which was coming into being as a result of a directive issued by the Prime Minister to the Director of the Central Intelligence Organisation, who, had in turn, been promised the full co-operation of the Commissioner of Police and the Army Commander, to staff and equip it.

The Regiment's task was to carry out operations of a clandestine nature when and wherever it might be called upon to serve, drawing its manpower from the combined Security Forces and other *less obvious channels* . . . captured turned terrorists in other words . . . while receiving instructions from the Overall Co-ordinating Committee, the Director of the Central Intelligence Organisation, the Service Commanders and the Joint Operational Commands.

In day-to-day matters, the authority vested in the Director General of the Central Intelligence Organisation was delegated to the Officer Commanding, Special Branch, who, in turn, was responsible for ensuring the Commissioner of Police was kept fully informed of Selous Scouts' activities and that the Unit was run in accordance with the conceptual purpose laid down upon its inauguration, which was: *the clandestine elimination of terrorism and terrorists both within and outside the country.*

The Selous Scouts were only to be deployed in operational areas when full authority had been granted by the main Joint Operational Command, and in areas where no Joint Operational Command was established, through consultation with the respective Army, Special Branch and Police representatives.

Within the Selous Scouts there was a clear demarcation of responsibilities laid down with myself, as the Commanding Officer, responsible for matters relating to:

(i) the housing, training and discipline of all Army personnel;
(ii) the tactics adopted in the field by operational units in conjunction with other armed services;
(iii) the movement and physical deployment of operational units and their re-supply;
(iv) the briefing of the Army Commander and the Brigadier commanding the Joint Operational Commands in the field; and
(v) the control and direction of Army liaison officers at sub-Joint Operational Commands and for overall communications.

On the Intelligence side, the responsibilities would rest entirely with the Special Branch, and to effect this, a very fine Special Branch Officer, Superintendent Mac McGuinness, was attached to the Selous Scouts together with Detective Inspector Winston Hart, with a number of other Special Branch personnel scheduled to come over in the future.

Superintendent Mac McGuinness' responsibilities so far as the Selous Scouts was concerned, were in matters relating to:

(i) the physical recruitment of personnel other than Army personnel . . . *tame* terrorists in other words . . . to be employed in operations;
(ii) the compilation and sifting of Intelligence gleaned from all available sources for the prior briefing of Selous Scouts' teams to be deployed in the field;
(iii) the re-direction and keeping informed, from an Intelligence point of view, of personnel while they were deployed in the field and their full debrief at the end of deployments, and the compilation of reports for circulation to Special Branch stations;
(iv) the control and dissemination of Intelligence gleaned by the Selous Scouts and the overall security of the Regiment in all its facets;
(v) the welfare and employment of non-military personnel . . . *tame* terrorists in other words . . . and the payment of their salaries from monies supplied by a special vote handled by the Central Intelligence Organisation; and
(vi) the guidance of Police officers seconded to the Selous Scouts.

It was clear from this, that both Mac McGuinness and I each had very definite and important parts to play in the overall planning.

It was a very sensible joining together of the expertise of the Special Branch and the expertise of the Army . . . it was a union which was to have far-reaching effects on the war in the future.

General Walls made it clear I would have the right of direct access to him at any time . . . a most unusual facility indeed for a major . . . and I would be given top priority as regards men and logistics over the whole of the Rhodesian Army.

He went on to say that he had discussed the matter fully with his Chief-of-Staff, who fully understood the position and was particularly mindful of the urgency involved. He told me to report to him first thing the next morning to discuss details to get the formation of the Regiment under way.

The following morning, as ordered, I met with the Chief-of-Staff and, after a short conversation, it quickly became apparent to me that he did not share General Walls' sense of urgency over the establishment of the Selous Scouts . . . although he was aware of the make-up of the Unit and what its prime role was to be. He did not, certainly, seem to grasp how vital an effect the Regiment could have on the war effort.

I was left with the distinctly uneasy feeling that either his mind was too conventionally orientated to appreciate the value of the unorthodox or, like General Slim who had commanded the victorious fourteenth army in Burma during World War-2, he had grave reservations about the value of Special Forces in general and his true feelings were that the concept of the Selous Scouts was the product of a mildly romantic mind which, at the end of the day, would not achieve what was expected of it, to the detriment of the regular Army, which was already short of officers and men as it was.

He indicated to me kindly but clearly, that his experience, which had been formulated over many years of Army service, was that the formation of a new Regiment was not something which could be rushed . . . indeed, quite the reverse was the case. Things must be allowed to progress slowly and steadily . . . gauging everything to keep pace with the construction of the Barracks . . . so the Regiment would finally be formed simultaneous to the completion of the Barracks.

It was then and only then, that I learned with some surprise, that our Barracks were to be built at Bindura, a small town to the north of Salisbury where the main Joint Operational Command centre for the *Hurricane* operational area was situated.

This Joint Operational Command Centre had been moved from the Centenary European farming district to Bindura, as the area of operations against ZANLA had spread west to Mount Darwin . . . and . . . Bindura occupied a tactically better point of pivot and could be likened to the lower portion of a funnel.

To its north lay large tracts of tribal trust land and, as the main roads in the area converged upon the little town, tribesmen were forever moving through en route to Salisbury, or conversely, Africans from Salisbury were passing through Bindura on their way home on visits to the tribal trust lands in the northern part of the operational area.

The security of the African soldiers and the turned terrorists would pose particular problems for, if they were going to be moving about in the operational areas masquerading as terrorists, they most certainly couldn't afford to be seen living the normal life of soldiers . . . shopping in the shops or drinking in the beer halls of the Bindura location. And, with the continuous movement of tribesmen through the town, it took little imagination to see that the siting of our barracks there, would expose not only our men's lives to danger, but would also pose a threat to the security of our operations.

Subsequent recognition of our men, either soldiers or *tame* terrorists, in the operational area, would almost certainly result in their immediate compromise and, just as probably, their death.

Astonishingly, when I put this problem squarely to the Chief-of-Staff, he did not seem overly concerned and gave me the impression I was conjuring up problems where none existed.

He looked at me severely for a moment or two and then emphasized . . . firmly and categorically emphasized . . . that the site for the Barracks had already been chosen . . . it had already been surveyed even . . . and he was certainly not going down to the Department of Works to make a fool of himself by telling them that the Army couldn't make up its mind . . . and, 'could the Barracks be built elsewhere?'

So that apparently was that . . . or was it?

I decided I knew a little of the Army system of working so I moved through Army Headquarters checking out the reasons for the decision to site the Barracks at Bindura, for I too was determined . . . determined that, come what may, I was not going to have the Regiment's main base there.

It took only a little digging to discover that a Board of Officers under a Lieutenant Colonel had been convened, as is the Army practice: *to study the problems peculiar to the new Regiment which was to be known as the Selous Scouts and to select . . . in the light of those particular problems peculiar to the unit . . . a Barrack's site most suitable for it . . .*

Then came the rub . . . although they were solemnly charged with studying the problems peculiar to the Selous Scouts . . . they were not . . . because of the top security grading given to the Regiment . . . told what our true role was to be.

They had been left to assume, in a manner typical to the military working on the *need-to-know* basis, that we were purely a tracker unit.

It was therefore not surprising that the main factors the Board took into account when selecting a site for our Barracks, was that we should be based close to the operational area, that we had all types of terrain readily accessible where we could train our men and that we were adjacent to a good road system to aid rapid deployment.

I returned to the Chief-of-Staff and showed him the fruit my enquiries had borne . . . the siting had been based on a false premise . . . the siting was clearly ridiculous, particularly as it created definite dangers to my men.

The Chief-of-Staff was adamant and flatly declined to alter his decision.

'Sir,' I said after some reasoned argument had failed, 'you can obviously build the Barracks at Bindura, if you decree it, but I am afraid you will have to find someone other than the Selous Scouts to occupy them, because we won't be going there. I'll be quite happy to go under the trees if that is the alternative. And,' I added angrily, 'I'll be quite happy to explain my reasons in person to General Walls.'

A day or so later I was again called up by the Chief-of-Staff and asked to look at other areas with a view to the re-siting of our Barracks.

I sat down with a map of Rhodesia showing the tribal trust land areas to study the problem. The way things were escalating in the *Hurricane* operational area, I did not require a crystal ball to realise that the operational area, which was then still restricted to Rhodesia's north-eastern border, would soon increase massively in size.

It was essential, therefore, that we be positioned centrally in the country, so we were far enough away from tribal trust lands so the soldiers, *tame* terrorists and their families would be able to lead reasonably normal lives. It was vital too, that not only should we be adjacent to, or on a good road system, we also needed an airfield close by to aid rapid deployment.

After some thought and research I selected the small country town of Hartley, which fulfilled all the requirements I was looking for, but before I could set my reasonings down on paper for the Chief-of-Staff's attention, he again called me to his office and suggested Inkomo near Darwendale as an alternative.

Inkomo was one of two bombing ranges in Rhodesia used during World War-2 in the days of the Royal Air Force Empire Training Scheme . . . when Rhodesia was a valued son in the British Family of Nations.

One range then was called Miyasi and the other Miyelbo . . . both names seeming to echo shades of Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* and the mystical Mountains of the Moon, but this was not the case, for both names are reputed to have been bestowed, in fact, by a liverish high-ranking officer of the Royal Air Force, who, when asked what they should be called, as even bombing ranges had to be called something, is said to have snapped irritably:

'You can call one me' arse and the other me' elbow for all I care!'

After World War-2, Inkomo was given to the Army for use as a field-firing range and for training in general. It comprised some thirteen thousand acres, had an airstrip of sorts and was in fact an absolutely ideal situation for our Barracks.

The Bindura project, much to my relief, was immediately cancelled and planning went ahead for the construction to take place at Inkomo instead.

While the problem of the whereabouts of our future home was being sorted out, I busied myself with decisions, regarding what shape and size the Regiment should be.

I was no stranger to the formation of military units from bedrock, having been in at the birth of virtually every Regiment I had ever served with.

As a young soldier and a member of the Rhodesian contingent sent to Malaya which first of all, became 'C' (Rhodesian) Squadron of the Malayan Scouts and later 'C' (Rhodesian) Squadron of the British Special Air Service.

The Special Air Service had originally been formed during World War-2 by Colonel David Stirling as a Special Force unit for work behind the enemy lines in the Western Desert, but had been disbanded at the war's end. Elements of the unit had been comprised from the Free French and Free Belgian forces and the Regiment, although it had been temporarily disbanded by the British, held the singular honour of its badge . . . a winged dagger with the motto *Who Dares Wins* . . . being continued as a regiment of the line in both the Belgium and the French Armies after that war.

In later years I helped form a Territorial Army regiment in what was then Northern Rhodesia . . . now Zambia . . . and was the founding Regimental Sergeant Major of the Rhodesian Light Infantry in 1961, in which I afterwards served as a commissioned officer from 1964, until I went on leave pending retirement on pension in June, 1973.

During my Army service the necessity for good administration had been brought home to me with great force and this had made a lasting impression upon me. I couldn't put the cart before the horse . . . I first had to decide upon the shape and size of the Regiment and then select an efficient administrative staff to help me run it . . . then and then only, would I be able to give my attention to the selection and training of the operational soldiers.

While walking in 1st Street, Salisbury, one morning shortly after my talk with General Walls, I chanced upon Bruce Antonowitz, a former Sergeant I had once served with in the Rhodesian Light Infantry.

Bruce was working for a furniture manufacturing concern and he soon gloomily mentioned his total disenchantment with Civvy street.

During the course of our conversation I mentioned how I had been hi-jacked back into the Army by General Walls and tentatively suggested he might care to join me in the new Regimental venture . . . if he was *really* unhappy in civilian life.

He jumped at the chance and so became the first Quartermaster-Sergeant of the Selous Scouts . . . and . . . a very efficient one he made too. At a later point in time, after watching with great interest all the goings on of the Selous Scouts' operators, he opted to switch to operational duties and became an excellent operator himself.

Shortly after this, I was a guest at the wedding of an officer in the Rhodesian Light Infantry and, during the course of the reception afterwards which was held at the Officers' Mess, I was approached by Captain Jeremy Strong . . . an officer I had a tremendous respect and regard for . . . both as a man and as a soldier.

Jeremy was a notable personality in the Rhodesian Army, having gained his commission and won the Sword of Honour at the Royal Military College, Sandhurst. He afterwards, stayed on as an officer in a fine Regiment of the British Army. Then, when Rhodesia was declared unilaterally independent . . . UDI . . . on the 11th November, 1965 . . . he immediately resigned his British Army commission and hurried home to join the Rhodesian Army where he felt his place and his duty lay.

A fine and bold officer, he had been engaged in numerous skirmishes during the early years of the war and had been awarded a very good Bronze Cross of Rhodesia as a result of those actions, therefore . . . to put it totally bluntly . . . I was delighted when he volunteered to join me.

I promptly offered him the position of Regimental Second-in-Command, which he just as promptly accepted.

However, once I put this through to Army Headquarters, as a matter of routine, I was to learn that General Walls' definition of *top priority,* and what the Staff at Army Headquarters meant by *top priority* . . . were totally different . . . even irreconcilable things.

Jeremy was at this time an instructor . . . a not too happy instructor . . . at the School of Infantry, Gwelo, training officer cadets.

'What pray, Major Ron, will the School of Infantry do if we rob them of their most talented instructor? Who is going to take his place?'

'Where are we going to find a replacement for Captain Strong at such short notice?'

'You do realise, I hope, that you are interfering with Jeremy's career pattern and that this could have severe repercussions on his future promotion prospects?'

'Am I to understand . . .'

Every possible excuse, valid or otherwise . . . most of them being otherwise . . . that could be put forward, was put forward.

The urgency surrounding the formation of the Selous Scouts appeared to have no consequence at all and nor did General Walls' injunction that we were to be given priority in everything . . .

The morning after I had put in my request for Jeremy Strong, I was summoned peremptorily to a conference which had been urgently convened at Army Headquarters.

Presiding at the meeting was the G-I, Colonel Sandy Maclean, and the humblest rank of the rest of them, was a mere Lieutenant Colonel who had been delegated to take the minutes.

'Ron,' said Colonel Maclean irritably as I entered, 'you really are causing us a large number of headaches . . . most of them unnecessary. We all appreciate the problems you are facing . . . but I am afraid you must stop making waves . . . because . . . under no circumstances will you be able to have Jeremy Strong as your second in charge. We have spent a lot of time considering your position and, it is the unanimous opinion of us all, that the School of Infantry has a higher priority than the Selous Scouts.'

He paused for a moment and the Colonels on the board, signified their agreement.

'Listen to reason, Ron . . . you must understand . . .'

'Now,' said Colonel Maclean persuasively, 'be a good fellow and look at this short-list of persons we have compiled, all of whom we consider to be eminently suitable for the tasks envisaged for your new Regiment . . . take your choice.'

A colonel briskly read out three names.

I shook my head in disgust and bemusement . . . I was not interested in seniority rolls . . . or the right moves from anywhere to anywhere . . . all I was interested in was having the right officer for my second-in-command.

'Sir, I was promised top priority . . . the officer I need is Jeremy Strong . . . no one else you have suggested meets the bill.'

'Well,' snapped Colonel Maclean, 'you can't have him. Go away and get the Army nominal roll . . . see who else you think is suitable.'

I left the conference room and stomped furiously towards my temporary office. Halfway up the passage I met General Walls who clearly saw by the look on my face that all was not right with me.

'Morning, Ron . . . what's up with you?' he asked cheerily.

'Sir, you told me I would have top priority in everything . . . including manpower . . . I've just asked the Promotions and Postings Board . . . chaired by Colonel Maclean . . . for Jeremy Strong as my second in charge . . . he has volunteered for the Regiment . . . but his posting has been turned down flat.'

General Walls' face went as black as thunder . . . and . . . I immediately felt better . . . much better.

'I see,' he muttered in a low fury, 'come with me, Ron.'

He led me at a faster than light infantry pace into the office of a Major John Stokes . . . the officer responsible for implementing the final decisions after the studied deliberations of the Postings and Promotions Board.

'Stokey,' growled the General, 'get onto the School of Infantry, give the Commandant my compliments, and tell him that Jeremy Strong will be standing outside Ron Reid Daly's door by 08h00 this Monday coming at the latest . . . or I'll know the reason why . . . got that! And, while you're at it . . . to pre-empt any excuses . . . tell him . . . if he considers himself short-staffed . . . to cancel his forthcoming leave.'

General Walls stormed from the office, leaving John Stokes and I gawking at each other in astonishment.

Meanwhile, the Promotions and Postings Board, with Colonel Maclean in the chair, were still deeply engrossed in their conference as a *hot* signal flashed from Army Headquarters to the School of Infantry, ordering Jeremy Strong's immediate release.

Needless to say, I was not surprised to discover Jeremy standing outside my office at 08h00 on the Monday afterwards as ordered . . . although even he was still bewildered by the rapidly changing events as, only an hour before the order for his move had come through, he had been told by the Commandant, School of Infantry, with some satisfaction, that Army Headquarters had turned down his application to join the Selous Scouts.

The Regiment was starting to grow gradually.

It consisted now of a staff of three . . . which was assembled at Army Headquarters . . . myself, Jeremy Strong and Bruce Antonowitz.

In the field were the experimental teams which by then comprised of Flight Lieutenant Basil Moss, Sergeant Stretch Franklin, new recruits from the Special Air Service, Lance Corporals Chris Robins and Chunky Graham, a number of African non-commissioned officers and soldiers from the Rhodesian African Rifles and an increasing gang of *tame* terrorists.

Additionally, to make our cover authentic, the Army Tracking Wing based at Kariba, which consisted of a lieutenant and five instructors, was removed from the jurisdiction of the School of Infantry, Gwelo, and placed under my command to become part of the Selous Scouts.

Once Jeremy had arrived, he sat down with Bruce and I and we had our first ever conference. I synopsised the orders given to me by General Walls.

'Form a Regiment to be known as the Selous Scouts . . . yesterday.'

We looked at each other blankly for none of us really had much idea of pseudo operations, although I had taken the opportunity of speaking to some of the men based at the Joint Operational Command at Bindura.

It was clear we had to get men, particularly African men, and we had to get them quickly so we could expand and become operational. There was a problem . . . an unexpected one which had come after I had spoken to three soldiers, two of the Special Air Service and one of the Rhodesian Light Infantry, who had been detailed to make up numbers on a particular pseudo exercise.

All three had been totally scathing when expressing their opinion of the abilities of the non-commissioned officers and soldiers of the Rhodesian African Rifles currently attached to the experimental pseudo groups.

'They are,' one of them suggested, 'cowardly and untrustworthy . . . politically unsound and badly trained . . . totally ill-disciplined and useless . . .'

This awfully discouraging picture of the African soldier was a great personal blow to me which immediately dispelled any ideas I might have had of a swift transformation of existing African regular soldiers into pseudo operators.

I repeated these very discouraging viewpoints, from soldiers who had been with the teams in the field, to the Chief-of-Staff and to the G-I, Colonel Sandy Maclean . . . later to become Commander of the Rhodesian Army.

Neither of them, to say the least, were exactly overcome with joy at hearing my tidings, as both were very proud former Commanding Officers of the Rhodesian African Rifles.

I told them that in view of what I had heard, I had decided to start from scratch . . . recruit from civilian sources . . . build up from grassroots. Perhaps, I didn't really know, a soldier needed to be trained as a pseudo operator right from basic minus one. But, basic training,

followed by specialist training, would take at least six months from the time the course commenced . . . which meant we would not become operational for at least that period.

The Chief-of-Staff and the Colonel G-I, while clearly put-out by the disparaging allegations levelled against the honour of the Rhodesian African Rifles, did not otherwise appear at all perturbed about the probable delay in getting pseudo operations underway. In fact, they expressed relief that, at least, the Rhodesian African Rifles would not suffer from the ravaging depredations of our recruiting teams.

General Walls, of course, viewed the delay differently and was most upset but nevertheless accepted it philosophically.

I must say, that truthfully, in view of the task I had been chosen for, I had really little experience of African soldiers during my twenty years of service. The only time I had actually served with African soldiers had been in 1954, when, after my return from Malaya, I had promptly volunteered for service with the Rhodesian African Rifles, which was due for a tour of duty in Malaya.

The thought of peace-time soldiering in Rhodesia, with never the opportunity for another war, did not enthuse me at all. Africa, as a whole, was a peaceful continent . . . a haven of tranquility . . . I could not envisage any decent wars breaking out there at all . . . and . . . if I did not grab the opportunity of returning to Malaya when I could, then clearly, even though I was young, I would lose my last ever opportunity of seeing active service again.

The short experience . . . a mere six months . . . I then spent with the Rhodesian African Rifles had not impressed me at all incidentally. It was run, at that time, on the archaic lines of an Indian Army Regiment during the reign of Queen Victoria.

The officers too, at that time, were really quite the most dismal and unenthusiastic lot I've ever had the chance of serving with during my time as a soldier.

On an efficiency basis their standard of training, at that time, was really quite dreadful and their administration worse. The only thing the Regiment seemed to shine at was ceremonial drill, which was practiced assiduously, mainly it seemed, because it was always thought they should be providing the ceremonial guards at Government House, instead of the Askari Platoon of the British South Africa Police . . . later the Support Unit . . . and they thus wished to prove they were the superior. I didn't go to Malaya . . . others who hadn't seen active service went instead.

After their return from active service in Malaya things were noticeably different, and they bore much more the stamp of a fighting Regiment. Nevertheless, in the long terrorist war that was to finally face us all, it was never able to match the results in kills that were produced by the all-white Rhodesian Light Infantry.

So, not only was my experience with African soldiers lacking, but my yearly confidential efficiency reports, covering a period of twenty years, had always routinely indicated I was not suitable for service with African troops. I never wondered why this was said and I never queried or even objected to the phrase, because it safely ensured my service remained entirely with European soldiers . . . which completely suited me.

It was only later, when commanding the Selous Scouts that, for the first time in my life, I came to know and understand the African soldier and began to realise the qualities of a soldier rest not at all with the colour of his skin, but on the man himself, his training and in particular, the leadership provided for him.

Certainly, I can categorically say now, I have nothing but the utmost admiration for the African soldier, and this includes many of the so-called *tame* terrorists I later commanded, who proved to be fine soldiers indeed, and I shall always count myself as fortunate, and I am certainly proud, to have commanded them.

However, at that point in time . . . because of my abysmal lack of experience of the African soldier . . . I had naively accepted, without question, the word of the *experts* who had told me how they had allegedly shaped up as members of the pseudo teams.

A few days afterwards I gained, for the first time, the opportunity to speak to Basil Moss and Stretch Franklin . . . they had just returned from an operation.

I told both men that a complete Regiment was about to be formed as a result of their experimentation with the pseudo concept, which had been eminently successful in proving the whole thing. Both were absolutely delighted to hear the news.

I then outlined my plans for the recruitment and training of the new Regiment and in passing, expressed my extreme disappointment at the poor showing which had been put up by the Rhodesian African Rifles' soldiers who had been serving with them.

To my absolute astonishment both Stretch Franklin and Basil Moss immediately jumped to the defence of the Rhodesian African Rifles' soldiers, expressing surprise and anger at my statement.

'Sure there had been a few misfits and old soldiers from the Rhodesian African Rifles who'd thought they were transferring to a cushy number, but we soon weeded them out and now we have nothing left but first class material . . . in fact, second to none,' said Stretch Franklin.

'I don't know where you got that bull from, Sir,' said Basil Moss, 'but all I can say is that I have been very proud to share a roof with them.'

Upon being acquainted with what was to me, marvellous news, I hastened back to Army Headquarters and advised General Walls of this recent development.

His attitude was one of relieved pleasure and what was more, he readily gave me permission to recruit from the Rhodesian African Rifles as soon as I wanted to and to take as many men as was practicable in the circumstances.

The Chief-of-Staff and the Colonel G-I, however, had different ideas and expressed a part-valid concern that we might neutralise the effectiveness of the Rhodesian African Rifles, if all of their non-commissioned officers volunteered for the Selous Scouts. Non-commissioned officers, particularly the younger element, were precisely the men I was after for obvious reasons, but I began to get the feeling of a distinct resistance block against me personally, and the scheme as a whole.

Realising this, I immediately gave an undertaking that I would not recruit anyone from the Regiment who was above the rank of corporal, which was accepted. I then asked that a signal, originating at Army Headquarters, be sent to the various detachments of the unit concerned, advising them the programme of our recruiting team and ordering that all possible assistance be rendered to them.

A certain amount of outraged indignance was expressed by certain senior officers at Army Headquarters.

'Of course the Rhodesian African Rifles will play the game . . .'

'A signal will be absolutely insulting . . .'

I ignored the outrage and insisted.

Finally . . . after much argument . . . the phrasing of the signal was agreed upon.

The Chief-of-Staff insisted, however, that before it was sent I pay a personal courtesy visit to the Commanding Officer of 1-Battalion, Rhodesian African Rifles and brief him on what was about to take place, as he was clearly going to be the major loser in the way of experienced manpower.

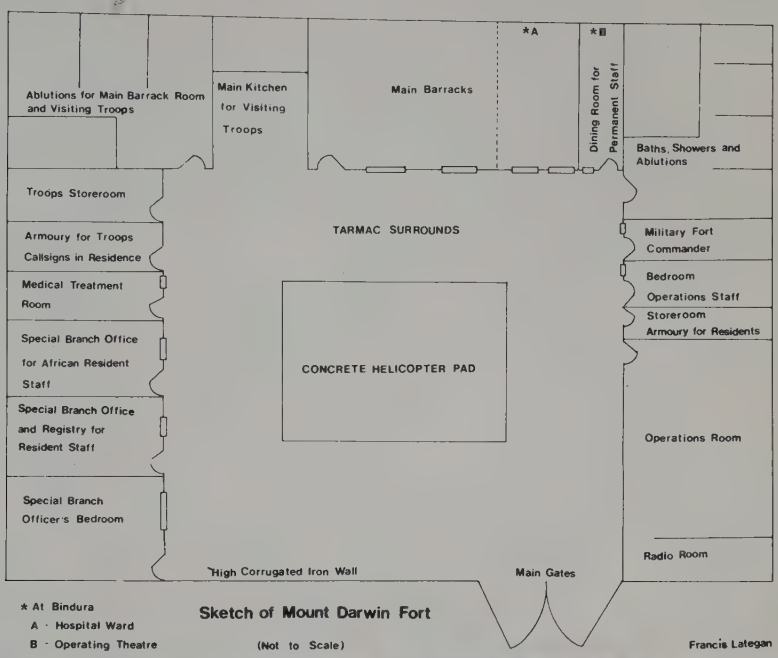
Bearing in mind the Chief-of-Staff's injunction, I 'phoned the adjutant and made an appointment to see the Colonel at 10h00 the next morning at his field headquarters in the Centenary European farming area.

Jeremy Strong and I arrived on time and were ushered into the Operations Room where the Colonel presently joined us.

To my astonishment he immediately launched into a diatribe against the Selous Scouts.

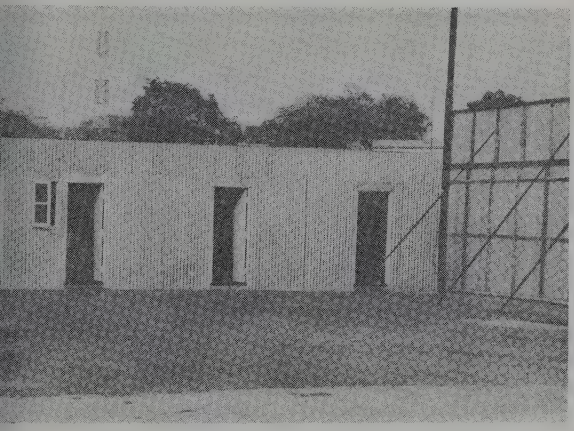
'It's going to be a balls-up,' he grunted, 'not enough Rhodesian African Rifles' officers . . . we're the only people in the Army who understand the African soldier . . . utter nonsense to take soldiers from the Special Air Service and the Rhodesian Light Infantry when you are recruiting Africans for a multi-racial unit . . . anyway, all that besides . . . you're not getting any men at all from me . . . I don't see any need for the formation of the Selous Scouts . . . the Rhodesian African Rifles can do the job quite easily . . . doing it already, in fact.'

6. Selous Scout pseudo group parading in fort prior to deployment.



8. *Below:* Interior of Mount Darwin Fort.

9. *Below:* Captured terrorists making indications to Detectives. Hoods were worn to stop the terrorist network becoming aware of their capture and consequent turning.



10. and 11. Farm camp at Trojan Nickel Mine. The rondavel was used as an all-ranks wet-canteen.

12. Lieutenant Colonel Ron Reid Daly, founding commander, the Selous Scouts.

'Sir,' I interjected patiently, 'with respect, we haven't come all the way to Centenary to collect opinions on the formation of the Selous Scouts. We're here because I've been ordered to get it off the ground as a matter of top priority by the Army Commander, General Walls. If we've come just to be told we can't recruit from your Battalion, then I'll hop in my car and head straight back to Salisbury and toss the problem back in General Walls' lap.'

There was an immediate and abrupt change of attitude by the Colonel . . . he remained hostile and unwilling, but was at least prepared to discuss the matter.

'How do you propose to go about recruiting anyway? I can't pull everyone out of the bush for you.'

I ignored his studied sarcasm and patiently explained there would be no requirement for this, as I would visit the men in their bush-camps or at their barracks in Bulawayo, and that in any event, I did not possess the Staff to process large numbers of recruits.

'Indeed,' I said, 'we still have no idea what the pass rate of those put through the selection course will be.'

The Colonel grudgingly acquiesced and consented to schedules, timings and venues for our recruiting teams being worked out.

I looked towards the Army Tracking School at Kariba which had been put under the Selous Scouts to reinforce our cover that we were a regiment of trackers.

I decided the time was opportune to temporarily halt all tracker training there, so I could use the instructors to assist in the selection of personnel and to instruct and test them out on the selection course afterwards. I had no one else I could use.

I also planned on, temporarily, withdrawing the experimental teams so they could assist, particularly on the final phase of the selection course, when we would have to introduce conventional soldiers to the art of being passable pseudo terrorists.

Both of these requests were turned down flat by Army Headquarters.

The first on the grounds that the tracker situation was desperate, and the second because Headquarters 2-Brigade, felt it was impossible for them to be left with a vacuum of intelligence in the *Hurricane* operational area.

To be fair it was accepted I would need some experienced personnel to assist in the training of future Selous Scouts, but nevertheless an effective pseudo presence had still to remain in the *Hurricane* area to keep the counter-insurgency fort.

The first objection was, in my opinion, simply a dog-in-the-manger attitude, for even though there was a paucity of trackers, they were not, *per se,* proving of much value as a counter-measure to the new tactics being employed by ZANLA and their tribesmen assistants, who made a point of obliterating the terrorists' tracks after an attack.

2-Brigade's objection was a very valid one indeed, but the pathetically low numbers of men consisting the experimental teams, made it impossible for me to precariously balance and cater for both requirements at the same time.

I discussed my difficulties with General Walls and suggested that a possible solution might be to immediately recruit three extra European officers or non-commissioned officers. I would feed them into the existing groups and allow them to learn their trade on an on-the-job-training basis, which would permit me to withdraw the others so we could get busy forming the Regiment.

I estimated it would take the three new men two months to learn their job, before they would be ready to be left on their own.

Army Headquarters agreed to my proposals and I chose three men from the Army nominal roll.

My first choice was Second-Lieutenant Dale Collett, a South African by birth, who had been commissioned into the Rhodesian Army after completing an officers' course at the School of Infantry, Gwelo. He was fluent in Zulu and had been posted to the Rhodesian African Rifles on being commissioned because of his linguistic abilities. Afterwards, however, he had quickly fallen foul of his Commanding Officer, who apparently did not regard him as possessing the right constituents for that pot-luck stew which goes by the name of officer material.

However, the reports I had seen of his operational work were very good indeed and he was reputed to have an extremely good rapport with his African soldiers. When I later got to know him personally, I concluded that perhaps the remarks of his Commanding Officer had not been fully considered and were the result of a basic clash of personalities. Dale was a young man of exceedingly high spirits and probably did not fit the mould of the pass-the-port-to-the-left, (without spilling it), type of officer favoured by the officers of the Rhodesian African Rifles, who were ever engaged in a constant campaign to keep the war at a high level of gentlemanly tone . . . in case, without their efforts, it should degenerate into an unseemly shooting match.

My second selection was Sergeant Charlie Krause, Rhodesian Light Infantry, who was an excellent soldier and a renowned tracker who had run the Rhodesian Light Infantry Tracking Troop, when I commanded them as the Officer Commanding, Support Group.

The third was Corporal Hennie Pretorius of the Special Air Service.

A signal was immediately despatched by Army Headquarters ordering all three to report forthwith to the Joint Operational Command at Bindura.

Finding Charlie Krause and Hennie Pretorius presented no problem at all, for they were immediately available and to hand.

Dale Collett, however, was in the middle of Mozambique with his platoon working on an anti-terrorist operation in co-operation with the Portuguese.

A helicopter was despatched to the general area in Mozambique where Dale Collett's platoon was supposed to be operating, with strict instructions to find, uplift and fly him to the nearest airstrip, from where he could be flown by fixed wing aircraft to Bindura as soon as was possible.

The pilot duly made contact and advised Dale of his impending pick-up.

Dale, who was not sold on the scenic beauty of that part of Mozambique . . . it was not, after all, Beira or Lourenco Marques . . . expressed immediate enthusiasm at the idea of pick-up. However, when he realised to his dismay, that the pick-up was not for his whole platoon, but only for himself and that his men were consequently to be left out there in the bush without an officer to lead them, a heated argument took place which only subsided after the pilot had made it clear to Dale that the order had come from the highest of levels . . . General Walls himself.

He reluctantly clambered aboard the helicopter, and was taken to the Bindura Joint Operational Command, arriving in a highly indignant and even beliggerent frame of mind.

This was the first time I had met Dale and I remember well the intensity of his concentration while I explained to him and the other two the urgent leadership needs of the Selous Scouts.

Hennie Pretorius declined to join us, feeling he would prefer to continue serving with his first love . . . the Special Air Service . . . but to my intense relief both Dale Collett and Charlie Krause said they would like to give the Selous Scouts a try.

Until this time, of course, the pseudo teams of Stretch and Basil had still been operating closely with Winston Hart, who had been keeping them between bush deployments in the *safe houses* he had obtained from the Internal Affairs Department at Mount Darwin.

Clearly, with the expansion of the experiment into a regiment these would no longer be adequate. We needed a much larger base in the operational area from where we could work until such time as we became more permanently housed at Inkomo.

I asked Winston Hart if he could help by finding some sort of temporary premises . . . on an unoccupied farm or something . . . preferably near Bindura.

He put the problem to Detective Inspector Vic Opperman at Special Branch, Bindura, and he came up with two suggestions, both of which we went to look at.

The first was an abandoned farm which I did not think suitable and the second was a small farmhouse on an unoccupied part of the Trojan Nickel Mine claims, which, I decided, seemed as good as anywhere.

All existing personnel were switched to this, our new farm-base, including the nucleus of the Special Branch team which would henceforth work with the Selous Scouts . . . which was, at that time, only Winston Hart and some African personnel.

Before Dale Collett and Charlie Krause were put out with Stretch Franklin and Basil Moss, I

took the opportunity of paying a visit to the farm to see how things were going there and, for the first time, to meet the African element of the group.

I found it an intriguing experience. I was a long-service soldier used to my men being either in a parade ground turnout of smartness or, at the least, in a battle-field condition of some uniformity, which was certainly not the case with my new command.

The Africans I met were either soldiers of the Rhodesian African Rifles or *tame* terrorists and it was impossible to distinguish, by looking at them, who was the terrorist and who was the soldier.

They were all bearded, wore long matted hair and presented an image of edgy unsettled wildness. Their eyes roved continually and each seemed highly alert and conscious at all times of his surroundings. Which perhaps, when one considers the state of limbo they existed in while operating in the bush, was hardly surprising.

I remember the thought crossing my mind, as to whether or not I should consider requesting the services of a unit psychologist as I could scarcely believe a human being could stand for long the enormous strain of adopting a dual personality . . . living a lie in a twilight world out in the bush in the most precarious of circumstances, and then, when in town, being a normal soldier again.

It worried me . . . I wasn't sure if men would end up mentally wrung out and drained . . . being bush-happy, is not, after all, just an expression.

What impressed me most was the immensely close sense of comradeship which was evident between the Europeans and the Africans. There was no racial discrimination whatsoever . . . the atmosphere was one of an easy, almost casual, mutual respect and there was no doubt they all trusted and had a high regard for each other, and that this cut right through racial lines.

I determined then and there that this was how the Selous Scouts must continue to be . . . where men were men and neither race nor colour made a jot of difference.

I then made the discovery that although this small elite unit, which was now mine, had been in existence in an experimental state for some ten months, it had not been visited at all by any officer of high rank . . . their only link with the Army being through the Brigade Intelligence Officer, Lieutenant Mick Graham, and other officers who had been assisting with deployments, like Captain Dumpie Pierce and Lieutenant Neil Kriel.

General Walls happened to be on an inspection tour in the *Hurricane* operational area at the time, so I contacted him and suggested it would be excellent for the morale of the group . . . if it was displayed their existence was known and appreciated . . . by the General paying a visit to them at our bush-camp on the Trojan mine.

The *tame* terrorist element would be particularly appreciative and pleased I believed.

General Walls agreed without hesitation and he displayed great interest as I drove him out to the farm base for, as with most of us, the never-never-land of turning and using captured terrorists to fight against their own kind was still a difficult concept to actually accept and believe, when looked at in reality.

General Walls, immaculate in uniform, gave the appearance of being a very surprised *Ali Baba* suddenly learning that the forty thieves were, in reality, all close friends and that the boiling oil could be completely dispensed with after all.

He eyed each man keenly as I introduced him.

'General, this is Comrade John Chidongo . . .'

'Comrade Umbaiwa, Sir . . .'

Soldierly ranks were not used within the group for reasons of security and to prevent slip-ups when deployed and I could see that in spite of himself, the General winced each time the term *Comrade* was used.

We reached a particularly evil-looking and strong-smelling specimen standing in the line and he was unable to contain himself any longer. Leaning back he whispered surreptitiously to me:

'Is he a terr?'

'No, Sir, he is a Corporal from the Rhodesian African Rifles.'

Back at Army Headquarters, jammed in between the accountants, Jerry Strong and Bruce

Antonowitz, were working flat out producing Staff-Tables for kit, transport, weaponry and putting in the foundations for an orderly administrative system for the fighting Regiment to be.

One day I noticed a file as I sat down at my desk, and glancing through it I saw it dealt with the subject of Regimental embellishments for the Selous Scouts.

It was, I must explain, the custom in the Rhodesian Army to invite the Army itself to produce names, ideas for regimental badges and a colour scheme for any new unit prior to its formation.

Naturally, this often proved irresistible to the odd wag and I remember looking at a badge design, submitted by a major of the Corps of Signals, which showed a graphically well-drawn illustration of a highly inflamed eye-ball peering through the aperture sight of a rifle.

Amongst the more serious suggestions was a submission from the Army Tracking Wing at Kariba, which suggested as a cap badge the view of an eagle taken side on, a beret of brown and a green stable belt.

Written against this suggestion was an ink footnote ... noting the comments of a certain senior officer who had formerly served in the Rhodesian African Rifles, in which he criticised the idea of a brown beret as the colour had witchcraft connotations to the African mind, which made it, he said, an unacceptable selection.

I read his comments with considerable interest, not so much because of the witchcraft connotations of the colour brown, but because I was personally opposed anyway to brown berets ... mainly, I think, because the infantry of the Portuguese Army had worn brown berets and I had not been overly impressed when working with some of them. Consequently, I had no wish for the Selous Scouts to appear in the guise of the Portuguese Army.

At the end of November, I drove up to Kariba to brief the Tracking Wing as to what would be the pattern of future events now I was their new commander. Being tracking orientated the personnel there were, as I had expected, pleased at the idea of the formation of a Regiment of trackers. For reasons of security I made no mention at all of the pseudo side to come.

During the course of my briefing I mentioned I had read their memorandum and personally agreed that while the eagle seemed a pretty suitable choice for a badge, I could not, for the life of me, see why a brown beret and green stable belt had been settled upon, as I felt the Rhodesian Army was already over-saturated with green.

'Sir,' one of them said, 'if we are to be the bushmen of the Army, then we should adopt the colours of the bush which are brown and green,' which was eminently sensible and, so far as I was concerned, clinched the argument.

The idea of an eagle as a badge, incidentally, had originated from Andre Rabie, when he was an instructor at the Tracking Wing. He had set an eagle between the crossed bayonet and assagai of the School of Infantry and it had become the strictly unofficial badge of the Tracking Wing ... or *Tackie Wing* as it was often wryly called, because the instructors always wore super pro hockey boots, without socks, while working in the bush.

While the emblem of the Tracking Wing was not finally adopted for the Regiment, their other innovation, the super pro hockey boots without socks were, and they were finally adopted as the standard footwear used by the whole of the Rhodesian Army, while on operations in the bush.

Naturally through, the ordinance term: *boots, black, super-pro, hockey,* was unacceptable to the antitypical quartermaster mind which was apparently loath to concede a uniform item, could, by virtue of its name, be used for a non-military purpose, so they were re-named as *boots, clandestine.*

On my return journey to Salisbury, I stopped off on the way, at the office of a District Commissioner who was an old friend of long standing. I asked him for a run-down on the correlation between African superstitions and colours.

'Simple,' he had said, 'black and white are good colours which is why you see them used by the *swikewiros* – the spirit mediums, and the *ngangas* – the medicine men. Red is deemed an evil colour because it identifies with blood so should, consequently, be avoided at all costs.'

While we were talking, one of his uniformed messengers walked past his office wearing his uniform jacket of khaki with red cuffs and his bush-hat with a red puggaree.

'If what you say is true,' I said, nodding at his messenger, 'how come your messengers have red trimmings on their uniforms?'

'Well,' laughed my friend the District Commissioner, 'it goes back to the old days of the Pioneer occupation in 1890. The early Native Commissioners knew little of African custom, and being former soldiers and Policemen from the Pioneer Column, I doubt they particularly cared either. They were merely looking for an impressive uniform that the indigenous tribal people would admire and look up to as a symbol of authority.

Presumably, one of them favoured red and that was how the uniform came about. The African, of course, though he might not personally approve of red, would not view it too badly, because, as I am sure you are well aware, Africans regard the white man as being immune from their particular brand of witchcraft.'

On arrival back in Salisbury, I immediately sat down and wrote a memorandum putting the colours of brown and green forward to the Army Dress Committee, so they could set the dreary gears of Army Headquarters into their fastest speed ... which was dead slow ... while we concentrated on the training and organisation of the Regiment.

One afternoon, General Rawlings entered my office puffing at his pipe and generating a smoky haze which reminded one that the prevailing wind was probably blowing from the stable lines at the British South Africa Police Depot behind us.

Somewhat diffidently he slipped a sheet of paper in front of me.

'I was doodling during the lunch hour and came up with this,' he said apologetically. 'I knew you were thinking of an eagle, but I didn't know which species of eagle you had in mind. I found a photograph in a library book of an osprey striking for a fish, and used that as a basis for my design.'

Sketched on the paper was a stylised version of an osprey about to drop onto its prey. It was clean, free of ostentation and fitted the Selous Scouts like a glove. I liked it very much and so did everyone else ... eventually it became the official badge of the Selous Scouts.

The time had come to commence recruiting in earnest. We had already had a very good response from the European element of the Army in spite of the opposition, stumbling blocks and a continual barrage of complaints from various commanding officers and from Army Headquarters.

One of the major faults of the Rhodesian Army, in my opinion, was that they had inherited from the British Army the same ability to fumble around and fritter away good opportunities or ruin good ideas because they never seemed to get their aim or their priorities right. They seemed to find it impossible to ignore the trifling and the irrelevant.

Working on the old Regular Army peace-time axiom, that it was difficult to *soldier in war-time,* the Army hierarchy invariably showed a sullen and marked reluctance to move away from established principles or procedures ... even if they were proving ineffective.

Strategy and tactics had to come from the Staff College rule book ... nothing else was worth looking at.

As a consequence, change and innovation invariably originated from the lower rank echelons and ideas only gradually filtered their way up through hard bedrock to the top. Needless to say, a lot of good innovations never managed to surface. I can safely say that during the long war in Rhodesia, little initiative came from the top brass and the high reputation for brilliant improvisation and a capacity to take superb calculated risks, was earned by the commanders in the field and their subordinates.

When first being given command, Army Headquarters had given me a file containing a draft proposal for the detailed organisation of the Regiment.

Basically it was to be of company strength ... in the region of one hundred and twenty officers and men all told. The command element was to be entirely European, and the highest rank to which an African could aspire, was to have been a colour sergeant.

Considering the size of the Regiment, the organisation proposed for it was quite reasonable, but I altered it slightly so that each section of eight men ... which corresponded to the size of an

average terrorist section . . . could be broken down for cover purposes, particularly as we were supposed to be a regiment of trackers . . . into two tracker combat teams of four men in each.

The complete section would have a colour sergeant (European) as the section commander, while one half section, or tracker combat team, would consist of a sergeant, a lance-corporal and two troopers (all African) and the other a full corporal, a lance-corporal and two troopers.

The troop . . . consisting of three sections of eight men or six tracker combat teams of four men in each, would be commanded overall by a lieutenant with a warrant officer, class 2, as second in command . . . both European posts at commencement.

Compared to the average infantry Regiment it was grossly over-ranked, for normally, a section is commanded by a corporal and the highest other rank in a platoon is also a corporal.

My fight to get these rank structures approved for the Selous Scouts became a real *knock-down, drag-out* affair with the Civil Service, who seemed firmly under the impression the money for it was coming from their very own pockets.

My reasons for requiring this high rank structure were quite simple. If we were to be an operational success and this success was to be of a continuing nature, then it was vital we maintain the highest degree of security. This meant the usual rapid turn-over of personnel due to promotions had to be avoided, for this would not only mean a loss of highly experienced men and a continuing replacement requirement, it would also mean an ever widening circle of people throughout the Army getting to know what we were doing.

My suggested rank structure was geared to enable a trooper or lance-corporal to join the unit and remain in the same troop for the timespan of years it took to reach the rank of warrant officer, class-2. In theory, each man, while climbing up the normal ladder of promotion, could spend a minimum of ten years with a troop when starting at the bottom. This should enable us to retain expertise and build up a formidable bank of experience.

There was also the point that with large numbers of *tame* terrorists operating in the field with sections, the actual commands, in fact, would be a great deal larger than eight men sections, or four men tracker combat teams.

I fared very well in my fight for the improved rank structures for the operational soldiers, but I achieved little success with decent rankings for the Regimental Administrative Staff and I was left with several badly under-ranked posts, which gave rise to serious problems once operations commenced.

The Quartermaster, for example, was a colour sergeant, while in the Special Air Service, a unit of comparable size, the Quartermaster was a captain.

The Regimental Signals' Officer was a freshly made up lance corporal who had only recently passed his basic signals' course . . . again the Special Air Service had a captain . . . I protested volubly to the Director of Signals who was huffily quite put out.

'After all, you are only commanding a company of trackers . . . so what do you require an officer for? I think, Major, you should consider yourself fortunate I have given you a lance-corporal, as most units of your size have nothing.'

This, of course, was where our cover story of being trackers had become a double-edged sword, because security did not allow me to explain exactly what our real function was, which would clearly have established our need for an experienced signals staff.

Like any other Regiment, we had a laid-down establishment of officers, non-commissioned officers, and soldiers against which, on the face of it anyway, it was reasonable for the various branches of the Army to calculate our needs in the way of rank gradings for various administrative posts, as well as our general supply and transport needs.

What only a few people were privy to, was that we had another personnel recruiting avenue, for which there was certainly no establishment guide lines and which was to prove unlimited . . . the captured and turned terrorists of ZIPRA and ZANLA, who would one day, whether actively or inactively operating with us, number the best part of a thousand men. And, because all their salaries were paid by Special Branch from secret funds, their presence with us was to be effectively disguised.

Unfortunately, this disguising of the turned terrorist presence made us appear greedy in our demands, when we put in for the ranks of our administrative staff to be appropriate to their responsibilities, because half of their responsibilities were also effectively concealed from view.

I appealed to Army Headquarters, but my appeal fell upon deaf ears. I was rapidly reaching boiling point.

The crunch came when I requested a large quantity of stores, vehicles and weapons, so I could commence the selection of operational troops for the unit.

Q-Staff refused to part with a single item . . . on the grounds we were not yet a properly constituted unit of the Army, and because no Staff-Tables had been approved to show them exactly what our entitlements were. My heated demands were met by a blank wall of total refusal.

At about 12h00 on a particularly hard day, I had had enough . . . it was clearly time to avail myself of my freedom of access to the Army Commander . . . I went to General Walls' office, knocked and entered.

'Sir, I suggest you find someone else for this job . . . I have just about had it.'

He peered at me over his half-rimmed spectacles.

'What's the problem, Ron?'

'Sir, when you gave me this job you said I was to have top priority, and even yesterday was too late.'

'That's quite correct,' he said, beginning to frown.

'You also said the Chief-of-Staff was in the picture as to the urgency and that I could rely on him to ginger up everyone in the event of delays.'

'That's quite so,' he agreed, his frown deepening.

'Well, Sir . . . with the greatest of respect, you'd better walk around these corridors and kick a few arses . . . because it seems to me . . . I am the only one, so far, who has got your message.'

I then proceeded to give him a fairly bitter, but certainly detailed and accurate account of the frustrations I had experienced at the hands of the Staff of Army Headquarters, and . . . from certain regimental commanders who were clearly hampering my recruiting efforts.

I stopped speaking suddenly on noticing a familiar blackening of his brow and the firming of his jaw as he clenched his teeth tightly. I knew the indications . . . I had known General Walls for a long time . . . he was about to blow a fuse.

'Leave it to me, Ron,' he said acidly, rising to his feet like a volcano about to erupt.

He straightened his jacket and stormed past me out of his office.

I walked back to those few meagre square feet of Army Headquarters which temporarily belonged to the Selous Scouts, and where Jerry Strong was busily engrossed in documents.

'Hold your hat, Jerry,' I murmured happily, 'I believe that at long last the shit is about to hit the fan.'

Shortly afterwards, we heard the urgent sound of hurrying feet moving along the corridors of military power on their way to attend an urgently-called conference by General Walls. It was no ordinary conference either, for the heads of the whole staff were required to attend . . . A-Branch . . . G-Branch . . . Q-Branch . . . led by the Chief-of-Staff himself.

Neither Jerry or I were privileged to hear what was said, to our lasting regret, but whatever it was, it certainly produced the desired effect.

While it was in progress I decided that, as it was nearly lunchtime, the particular circumstances pertaining justified a temporary tactical withdrawal to the Officers' Mess at King George VI Barracks.

As we reached the main entrance, looking I must confess, a little too innocent, we almost collided with the Staff who were emerging from General Walls' office. They had that shell-shocked look about them . . . as if they had just escaped with their lives from an encounter with a Russian T-54 tank, while armed with only their swagger sticks.

As we passed between them, I sensed many venomous glances being directed in our direction and I knew that while my desperate measures might certainly have influenced people . . . they had definitely not won me any friends.

After finishing lunch at the Officers' Mess, the Chief-of-Staff walked over to me and spoke, his voice dripping with sarcasm.

'If it is not too much trouble, Ron, do you think you could meet with the Staff at 14h00 in my office? I gather you've been having some problems.'

At 14h00 I took a deep breath, squared my shoulders and reported to the Chief-of-Staff's office where I met up with a very coldly formal group of Staff officers.

'What are your problems, Ron?' asked the Chief-of-Staff. 'We are here to help you.'

'Well, firstly, Sir, I'm being constantly badgered by General Walls to speed up the formation of the Regiment. He said I had absolute priority, yet . . . with respect . . . I'm being told by the Staff . . . yourself included . . . that things cannot be rushed and everything must be geared to the constrictingly slow pace of the Barracks' construction. Frankly, I can't for the life of me see the relevance of the Barracks because, so far as I am concerned, we can stick up some tents and live under the trees . . . which is exactly what we are doing on an abandoned farm at Bindura at this very moment.'

I then went on to say how my recruiting efforts were being hampered by parochial commanding officers who were doing everything they could to ensure I did not poach any of their men. I finished off by saying I was rapidly gaining the impression that nobody in Headquarters wished to see the Regiment actually get off the ground.

There was a profound silence for a few moments after I had finished speaking, then, surprisingly enough, a very helpful attitude suddenly prevailed, and all at once the stone-wall administrative problems I had been up against fell completely away.

Everything that I needed was suddenly available.

The Quartermaster General, Colonel *Crocodile* Craig, suggested an old disused border-control base camp at Makuti on the Zambezi escarpment, some sixty five kilometres from Kariba, which, with tentage, could house some two hundred men and prove, as it eventually did, to be an excellent stop-gap for a temporary training base, until we were able later to build our own on the shores of Lake Kariba.

Colour Sergeant Bruce Antonowitz immediately set to work drawing the necessary tents and accommodation stores we required . . . this time with everyone falling over themselves to assist.

Bruce immediately took off for Makuti with a convoy of lorries, to get to work establishing the camp.

With this major problem out of the way, I turned my attention to the recruiting of operational personnel. I had already been approached by numerous officers and other ranks of the Rhodesian Light Infantry and the Special Air Service and, judging by this response, I envisaged no problems in recruiting the required number of officers and European non-commissioned officers of the right calibre.

In fact, in finality, we had to turn volunteers away.

Surprisingly enough, in view of the high preponderence of African soldiers in the Army . . . something like four to one European . . . it soon became clear our major problem lay in the direction of the recruitment of African soldiers.

I needed experienced African soldiers . . . but so did the Rhodesian African Rifles and I could appreciate their feelings . . . they were fighting the war too, and hardly wished to be milked of their best men. Nevertheless, I needed men and my brief was to get them.

I had heard rumours filtering through to me via the African soldier circles, that the Africans in the Rhodesian African Rifles had been given very strong hints by their Commanding Officer, that should they volunteer for the Selous Scouts and afterwards fail the selection course, they would not be accepted back into the Regiment . . . as they would be considered *disloyal* . . . the mark of Cain which no soldier's career can ever be improved by.

I understood too that similar hints had been made in the all-European Special Air Service, whose Commanding Officer was also concerned at the interest being shown in the Selous Scouts by his officers and men.

I knew I was going to face a tough time attracting the right men from the Rhodesian African

Rifles and, if I was to have any chance of success at all, I would have to offer far better pay and promotion prospects than a soldier could ever hope to achieve in his home Regiment.

The only Special Force unit which had existed until that time in the Rhodesian Army, was the Special Air Service Squadron.

It was an all-white, all-volunteer unit and, because of their specialist training . . . parachuting, canoeing, demolitions and so on, and because they were asked to perform tasks with a greater risk factor than an ordinary soldier, they were paid one dollar and twenty cents per day more than the ordinary regular soldier, as a *special unit allowance.*

I immediately applied for this allowance to be made available to the Selous Scouts, as the high risk factor attached to the tasks envisaged, would be of a continuing and permanent nature. There was no objection in principle raised, except Army Headquarters suggested a lower sum be paid to the African soldiers . . . as their pay scales were lower than European pay scales anyway.

I kept obstinately to the viewpoint that the risks would be the same for any soldier . . . the colour of his skin would hardly make a difference and in the end I won, and all the Selous Scouts . . . black or white . . . became entitled to the same *special unit allowance.*

This was a concession of great importance to me, for not only did it show the African that his worth and abilities as a Special Force soldier were recognised to be equal to that of a European, it also showed that such humdrum civilian things as relative cost of living indexes had nothing to do with soldierly risks. It also incidentally, and more importantly, from a practical point of view, had the effect of nearly doubling an African soldier's pay.

The next thing I had to decide, in view of the insidious anti-Selous Scout campaign being propagated in the ranks of the Rhodesian African Rifles, was who I could get to speak to potential volunteers.

I certainly had to be present to answer questions, but I knew that to achieve the right impact, the lectures on the new Regiment should be given in Shona . . . good fluent Shona what was more . . . so the audience gained a clear understanding of everything that was said.

I knew the late Andre Rabie had become a legend in the Rhodesian African Rifles, mainly because of stories which had been taken back to the Regiment by students returning from tracking courses. Fortunately for me, Andre had a brother serving with the Territorial Army, Bruno, who was also a brilliant linguist, so I approached him and asked if he would accompany me on the recruiting tour and I was delighted when he accepted.

Sergeant Mawira, of the experimental teams, and now of the Selous Scouts, had just been discharged from hospital and was still recovering from a leg wound sustained when he had attempted to capture a ZANLA terrorist, was also detailed to come along with me.

Sergeant Mawira, old soldier that he was, was confident he would have no problem recruiting the cream of the Rhodesian African Rifles for me, so I gave him a pocket full of cash to mellow his victims in the canteen, while he put his silver tongue to work.

Faced with the formidable Bruno Rabie and Sergeant Mawira combination the Rhodesian African Rifles' anti-Selous Scouts campaigners stood no chance whatsoever and we were soon inundated with volunteers.

As we did not have the facilities to handle many men at a time at the Makuti training camp, I made arrangements for the volunteers to report there for selection, at weekly intervals, in batches of eighty men at a time.

Then, totally unexpectedly, two days before the first intake was due at Makuti, I received a formal signal from 1-Battalion Rhodesian African Rifles . . . ninety percent of all volunteers had withdrawn their names.

I immediately sought interview with the Chief-of-Staff.

'Well,' he shrugged, 'we can do nothing about it, Ron . . . they are supposed to be volunteers . . . we can hardly press-gang them.'

I told him I was convinced . . . he didn't share my conviction . . . that they had been intimidated into withdrawing and . . . I felt those who had put their names down for the course should be compelled to attend. If they passed the course, they would again be asked if they

wished to move to the Selous Scouts or, if they wished to stay with their Regiment. I made the point that not only would this be fair to the Selous Scouts, but it would also be fair to the erstwhile volunteers, most of whom I was sure, genuinely wished to join the Scouts.

The Chief-of-Staff demured at first . . . he felt it would be making accusations of intimidation against the Rhodesian African Rifles . . . but after I told him that without doubt I was prepared to reconsider my retirement from the Army over it, he finally relented and ordered a signal to be sent to the Rhodesian African Rifles, instructing them to make all the volunteers available for the selection courses as and when they were required by us.

I had meanwhile arranged for the first European volunteers to arrive at Makuti just prior to the African soldiers so I could brief them.

I had decided to pass each newly formed troop out as a complete entity, so that hopefully, each selection course would produce me one troop of an officer, a warrant officer, three colour sergeants and twenty-five African non-commissioned officers and soldiers at best, or at the worst, the nucleus of a troop if the failure rate proved high.

I held a briefing session for the European volunteers and outlined the role and shape the Selous Scouts was to take. I made the point, quite categorically, that if the Regiment was to have any success at all, it had to be totally non-racial in character.

My purpose though was not to try to produce European-type soldiers from Africans but to make very good African soldiers out of them instead, which seemed much more eminently sensible to me.

I wanted to amalgamate the best of the African customs with the best of the European customs, and once we had found the right recipe and blended the ingredients together, we'd have a very special sort of relationship between the races, of a type, at that time, unknown in the Rhodesian Army.

This special relationship, as I called it, would be based upon the recognition of one another's differences in culture and customs, coupled with a mutual respect for each other as fellow soldiers of the Selous Scouts.

The catalyst to promote this state of affairs would be the selection course and on that course colour, rank and racial differences would count for nought.

The abilities of each individual person, proven beyond doubt by an arduous and demanding selection course, would thereafter be the criteria by which each man who passed it would regard his fellow Selous Scout, be he an officer, non-commissioned officer or private soldier. They would be brothers in arms who had together braved the cauldron of fire and proved themselves.

I told them there was no doubt whatsoever in my mind that the Regiment was going to be a resounding success . . . I was going to ensure it was . . . but there was a lot of hard work ahead of us to achieve this. I reminded them that any Regiment is only as good as its leaders, and that as the European element were primarily there to provide the leadership, a heavy responsibility lay upon them, from me, as their Officer Commanding, down to the lowest ranking European soldier.

I wanted leadership by example and not, *pass-the-port-the-men-have-their-groundsheets.* type of leadership.

I then explained that the African soldiers who would be coming on the selection course, would not be told anything of the pseudo side of operations until they had actually passed the course. Those who failed would never be told.

The European element, at the end of all this, were clearly as keen as I was to make things work.

When the African soldiers undergoing the selection course arrived at Makuti, they presented a very different picture to the obvious enthusiasm of the Europeans. Although they had all volunteered in the first place they had clearly been got at and soured . . . an atmosphere of almost open hostility prevailed.

I addressed them in English using an interpreter to translate my words into Shona.

One of them, acting as a spokesman for the rest, interrupted and said they did not need an interpreter . . . as they all spoke English.

I replied mildly, that I knew they all spoke English but, because I wanted to be absolutely certain there was no misunderstanding of anything I said, I still required everything to be repeated in Shona.

I then continued and went on to tell them I was well aware that pressures had been exerted to dissuade them from joining the new Regiment, and that while I was sure there were some who had genuinely changed their minds, there were others who wanted to try the course, but wished to avoid the invidious position which might lead them to being victimised by the senior warrant officers of their Battalion . . . perhaps, after some prompting by the officers . . . if they failed the selection course.

'It is because of this,' I said, 'that the Army has ordered that everyone who initially put their names down for this course will be compelled to complete it. However, all those who pass will be given the chance at the end to elect to return to the Rhodesian African Rifles or, to remain with the Selous Scouts. No one will be held to anything at this stage.'

There was a general perking up of morale after this and I could see that everyone agreed that what I had said was fair to all concerned.

I then reminded them, forcibly, that we were looking for men to do men's work . . . very tough men . . . then showed them a chart illustrating the extraordinary high level of promotion posts available to men in the Selous Scouts.

After they had digested this I casually lobbed in another bombshell. From the day a man passed the selection course and became a Selous Scout proper, he would draw an additional one dollar and twenty cents per day, *special unit allowance,* which would put their pay on a par with that of sergeant majors in a rifle battalion.

The men looked at each other open-mouthed and there was an immediate atmosphere change. Suddenly they were all keen volunteers once more.

After concluding the introduction, I brought in the European volunteers and handed over to the instructors to divide everyone up into the squads.

This first-ever Selous Scout selection course consisted of a hard programme of physical training, bush-craft, tracking, the testing and revision of all military skills . . . particularly including a large amount of shooting, and counter-insurgency tactical exercises.

Although it could not be compared with the toughness of later selection courses, when we had finally developed our ideas on what we needed, it was still nevertheless, a very tough course.

I soon found the average African has phenomenal physical endurance and possesses an almost uncanny ability to move and see at night and generally, his sense of direction is really quite incredible. On the darkest of nights he has the unerring ability to come home without the aid of a compass. As well as this, his powers to memorise and his keen sense of observation were factors which made a deep impression upon me, and which I was to take full advantage of when planning future operations.

Naturally, like all of us, he has weak points, but these we soon identified and made notes of to adjust in our future courses, so he could be trained to overcome them.

We soon discovered, for instance, that Africans don't like heights, so we immediately constructed a rope-walk amongst the highest trees, the end of which culminated in a hair-raising Tarzan-like swing to terra-firma below. To dissuade anyone who hated heights from doing anything silly like falling down, thorn bushes, tree stumps and big rocks were littered on the ground below.

The African soldiers viewed this with the utmost disfavour, and it was only the continually repeated sarcastic call that only women could fail to complete such an easy course, that made them grit their teeth and keep at it.

Their main soldierly weakness, surprisingly enough, was that on average, they showed a distinctive lack of aggression. The African, particularly the Shona, is a very gentle and happy person in his natural habitat, although as with most human beings, he is still capable of unbelievable barbarity and prone to being swept up by mob hysteria.

He also had a tendency to crumble if suddenly confronted with the totally unexpected and has difficulty in quickly adjusting to rapidly changing situations. This brings a danger of him breaking in panic and running while in combat. Which was why, I believe, the terrorists suffered such high casualties compared to ours in a contact . . . firefights were always unexpected and when the men facing them stood their ground and continued shooting, the terrorists invariably broke and ran and were shot down.

Yet, by a training which instilled iron-discipline into them and by constantly exposing them to sudden simulated stress situations, we learned how to overcome this failing to a great extent, but any European worth his salt who was in a position of leadership, always kept this potential weakness very much in mind during operations.

Another major weakness, which appeared to be general to the Africans, was an abysmally poor standard of shooting. It was a quite incredible experience for a soldier like myself, who had spent almost his entire service with European troops, to witness for the first time, the unbelievably appalling standard of musketry of the volunteer African soldiers who arrived to attend selection courses. Most of them too were trained and experienced soldiers with years of service behind them.

It was clear there had to be a reason for this . . . there was nothing wrong with their eyes . . . most of them had excellent eye-sight and were quick to spot movement when out in the bush . . . much better eye-sight probably than the average European. It had, I decided, to be something to do with the gun itself which was much more an alien weapon to an African than it was to a European. The conclusion we finally reached was that it stemmed from an ingrained fear of the weapon . . . perhaps the noise as it was fired . . . which resulted in an inability to control a natural flinching reaction.

To overcome this problem the Selous Scouts spent much time and shot off uncountable thousands of rounds of ammuition in practising our African soldiers on the firing range and getting them up to a reasonable standard . . . coaching them . . . watching their every move. By these methods and with much hard work, the shooting standard of our African soldiers soon shot up and it was not long before we produced a fair crop of first-class shots and marksmen.

But we were never able to afford to let go, and as a group returned from operations, they were sent to the rifle range to brush up, for if we allowed practice to slacken, the standard of shooting immediately plunged.

The best indigenous African shottists I came across during my army service in Africa were, surprisingly enough, the Fletchas of the Portuguese Army.

Shortly after accepting the task of forming the Selous Scouts I was sent to the Fletchas military camp near Vila Pery (now Chimoio) in Mozambique to study their methods and tactics which had proved highly successful in Angola . . . in fact, many Portuguese officers said openly that the Fletchas had all but won the war there, until things were thrown into turmoil by the political collapse in Portugal.

Their founding commander was Colonel Oscar Cordosa. He was Angolan-born and had joined the Portuguese Army at the outbreak of the terrorist war there. He had seen much action with his unit in Angola and Guinea Bissau and was a most highly decorated officer who had been awarded, amongst other decorations . . . the Portuguese highest award for valour . . . equivalent to the British Victoria Cross, the American Congressional Medal of Honour or the Rhodesian Grand Cross of Valour.

I had personally found him to be a very modest man . . . he never wore uniform, only jeans . . . so I was never able to inspect his medals!

He was a man who exuded incredible drive, strength of personality and . . . he had a terrible temper. His men, be they black or white, totally worshipped him and his strong personality dominated every facet of the Fletchas which was vibrant with efficiency and a sense of purpose.

He did not operate under the control of the Portuguese Army, but under the wing of the PIDE or, as it later became known, the DGS, the Portuguese equivalent of the Rhodesian Special Branch and, as was to happen to me too at a later stage, he complained of being continually

hampered and obstructed by certain Portuguese Army officers because of his high kill results which they felt reflected adversely on their own efficiency.

His methods, tactics and training were ridiculously simple, yet, perhaps because of this, very effective.

His training syllabus for the unit consisted only of long hours spent on repetitive training in basic skills, particularly range-work, and on foot and arms drill on the parade square.

While off operations the whole unit spent its mornings on various firing ranges bull-dozed into some hill-sides. While the range safety procedures might have been highly questionable... particularly when the Colonel, as was his wont, fired bursts of automatic fire from his favourite AK sub-machinegun past the ears of any soldier he considered to be idle ... the results he obtained were quite outstanding and compared very favourably with any all-European Rhodesian Regiment.

The linch-pin of all his training though, was iron discipline.

The supreme virtue of silence in the bush ... perhaps the most important single item encountered in insurgency operations ... was impressed by imposing silence upon his men throughout the day, except when they were answering an instructor.

Meals, during training periods, were eaten standing up and woe betide any soldier careless enough to rattle a utensil, for retribution was swift in the form of a boot in the backside, a cane wacked down on the neck or a hard punch upon the ear!

Ironically, when the Portuguese collapsed, Colonel Cordosa with some of his men forced their way across the Mozambique border at gun-point and made their way into Rhodesia. For a time he served under my command with the rank of Captain with some forty of his men, both black and white. It was hoped the remainder of his men would slip across the border too and a company of Fletchas formed, under the umbrella of my overall command within the Selous Scouts, to be used for cross-border operations in Mozambique.

Unfortunately, only a few more of his men arrived and we heard that large numbers of them had either been shot out of hand or imprisoned by the FRELIMO forces when they so abruptly assumed power after the Portuguese collapse. After a few months it became apparent the unit was a non-starter, due to the lack of numbers, and also because the men already in Rhodesia were not that keen to commence fighting again, after having lost their country, so the unit was finally disbanded.

By the end of the selection course's first week we were down to about half of those who had volunteered.

I was satisfied with the physical and mental calibre of all those who remained, but not really knowing the African soldiers well, I still had nagging doubts as to their courage quotient, so I arranged a little test to enable me to examine them more closely.

At the end of the basic course I arranged with the instructors for all the officers and men to take part in a final four-day endurance exercise, ensuring they were subjected to a maximum amount of heavy physical exertion, while allowing very little food or sleep to lower their resistance.

The exercise itself... which lasted four days, did not only involve endurance... speed too was a requirement, as well as accurate navigation both by day and by night.

At the end of each leg the volunteers found themselves faced with a task which they had to complete before going on with the next leg of the march. One of the tasks involved having to hump dummy landmines made of concrete for additional unexpected distances and then to lay them on particular pre-selected sections of road, which were being patrolled regularly by sentries... without being seen. Another was the carrying of sand boxes ... nice heavy sand boxes... representing ammunition boxes ... to a rendezvous with a friendly patrol where they would pass over the re-supply... another, just when they were desperate for sleep, was the laying of a night ambush... or attacking a quasi enemy camp.

Those who didn't drop by the wayside and who completed the course, were picked up by truck from deep in the bush on the morning of the fifth day. After being told they had passed

selection they were all in a state of high elation and sung all the way back to Makuti where the cook was preparing a gargantuan meal for them ... and ... everyone was hungry ... really hungry ... starving hungry ... we had made sure of that.

I gathered them together and informally addressed them close to the field kitchen, so that while I spoke, they were able to smell and savour the feast being prepared for them.

It would take a lot of cooking ... it wouldn't be ready until 18h00.

It was a deliberate psychological move to relax them ... showing all major hardships were a thing of the past.

I started by congratulating them on completing the course, but, just after I commenced speaking, a Special Branch officer stationed at Kariba drove up to the Makuti Police station, got out, and hurried over.

Everyone watched curiously as I excused myself, went into a huddle with him a short distance away and engaged in a few moments of whispered conversation.

I called one of the officers over and spoke to him in a stage whisper ... loud enough to be heard at least by some of the African course members.

'A camp containing eight ZIPRA terrorists,' I said, 'has been located by Special Branch on the lake shore in Zambia. We are the only troops in the Kariba area ... and ... the matter is urgent ... I want those terrorists ... by 12h00 I want your men sorted out with three days' rations and ammunition. You'll get your detailed orders by 14h00 ... set rehearsals for 15h00 ... we'll leave by road at 17h30.'

At 12h00 the whole course filed apprehensively into the operations room at the Makuti Police station, opposite our training camp, where I addressed them.

'I'm sorry this had to come today ... the day the course ended ... because I'm sure that you, like me, were really looking forward to the end of course party tonight. But, it is just one of those things I'm afraid ... the beer should keep for a day or so. A Special Branch informer ... a friendly Zambian fisherman ... has passed information that eight ZIPRA terrorists are presently based up here, having crossed over the lake into Zambia after completing operations in Rhodesia ...'

I tapped my pointer at a place on the map of hostile Zambia to indicate the camp and then continued.

'Special Branch will take over and give you a detailed intelligence briefing ... I'll then outline how the task is to be tackled ... but I must stress that they are important terrorists ... it's vital we kill, or preferably ... capture them.'

The Special Branch officer came onto the lectern and gave a detailed intelligence brief.

His source had been watching the base, on and off, for some weeks and had reported earlier that morning that eight terrorists were present in the base ... but they were only in transit, and transport was picking them up the following morning to take them to Lusaka for debrief.

Their leader was an important Sectorial Commander and his capture and the acquisition of any papers he was carrying would be an important intelligence find. It could likely enable Special Branch to smash the ZIPRA terrorist network in the Kariba/Urungwe areas ... and ...

I then took over and outlined my orders for the operation.

We were to depart from Makuti at 17h30 and arrive in the harbour area of Kariba after dark when we would embark upon the District Commissioner's launch ... a very large vessel equipped with radar ... and sail from the harbour at 19h00.

In order not to excite or alert local fishermen, all military personnel, apart from myself, who would be navigating, would stay below decks until disembarkation.

At 23h00 the launch was scheduled to landfall in Zambia on a small beach two kilometres west of the target camp. After moving in towards the camp, they would shake out into their stop positions at pre-designated points, and the assault group would go in.

Afterwards, all prisoners, and any captured documents and weapons, would be moved to the pick-up point. The boat, on being signalled, would head back to the beach, pick everyone up and the launch would steer back to Kariba.

'A nice simple operation,' I said, 'and what a fine way to round off a training course.' I beamed at them happily. 'Nothing like a bit of real live action.'

I watched the faces of my audience blandly. They showed expressions which covered the full spectrum from sheer stoicism . . . to concern . . . to incredulity . . . to amazement . . . that anyone should actually contemplate such madness . . . 'Any questions?' I asked briskly.

'Yes,' gulped an African soldier. '*Ishe,* what happens if the boat doesn't return to pick us up after the attack? It will mean we will be left in Zambia!'

'Don't worry,' I said breezily, 'I shall be in charge of the boat . . . if I say I'll pick you up then I'll pick you up.'

'But, *Ishe,*' pressed the cautious one, 'say you have engine trouble . . . say something like that?'

'In that case,' I said giving him a withering look, 'you will keep out of sight until the same time the following night when I shall return and pick you up.'

'Can't we have helicopters to uplift us?' suggested another soldier unhappily.

'No,' I said frowning, 'much too risky for helicopters . . . we can't afford to have any shot down . . . we can't replace them you know. Anyway, you've learned all that bush-craft . . . survival until we can pick you up shouldn't be a problem . . . just melt into the bush as you have been taught.'

It was a very subdued and thoughtful body of men who arose from the briefing, trooped out of the operations room, and went off to rehearse the *cross border* attack.

On the trip out the strain of the impending mission was evident on all faces. Their body smells too . . . the animal sweat odours that eminate from men whose nerves are stretched taut as bowstrings by the anticipation of danger . . . made me very thankful I was the navigator and thus able to escape the close and humid confines of the lower decks.

The plan, as I had outlined, worked like a dream except for one important thing . . . there were no terrorists found in the Zambian camp . . . although the troops re-embarked onto the District Commissioner's launch with a large bag of communist weapons, ammunition and some very intriguing looking documents.

The contrast on the return trip was remarkable and the flash of teeth in smiling ebony faces as they ribaldly joked amongst themselves and proudly received my congratulations, was something to remember.

At 09h00 the next morning, back at Makuti, I watched as a highly elated body of soldiers . . . who had put the strain and exertion of the selection course and the awful shock of having to go on immediate operations . . . completely behind them.

The debrief was duly given by the young officer in charge . . . all had clearly gone very well. After everything had been discussed and analysed in detail, I stood up to conclude the briefing.

'Gentlemen,' I said, 'I must congratulate you on the exemplary execution of the operation . . . it was really good. The only pity is that the terrorists we were after were not there . . . anyway, it is still early days for the Selous Scouts and there will be plenty of kills before long.

You all came up to my highest hopes and expectations and I am certainly pleased that none of you asked to withdraw from the operation.'

'Now,' I paused and looked around at their expectant faces, 'I want to let you into a secret . . . you did not go into Zambia last night . . . you landed in Rhodesia not too far from Kariba. I took the boat in a large circle covering a long distance, turning only very gradually, and then landed you on a peninsula, similar to the one where you should have landed in Zambia.

It was a final test to ensure you all had what it takes to be Selous Scouts.'

For a few moments there was an astonished silence . . . you could have heard a pin drop . . . then pandemonium broke loose, most of them refusing to believe they had not been to Zambia . . . many shouted across the room comparing verbal notes . . . some becoming very angry indeed and some even started shouting at me in their disbelief.

I called for silence and then, just as the hub-bub had died down, Trooper Obasi, a Matabele, later to win the Bronze Cross of Rhodesia, and destined to die tragically later . . . shot by his own side . . . sprang to his feet.

'*Ishe*, you didn't fool me . . . I was watching the stars . . . I was . . .'

'Don't bullshit me, Obasi,' I interrupted, 'you got taken in just like the rest!'

His attempt at denial was drowned by a roar of hilarious laughter as the lads, accepting at last that they had been well and truly taken for a ride, started to laugh at themselves which was the best possible thing that could have happened. It set the mood too for a marvellous passing out party which continued throughout the night.

I was only able to repeat my hoax exercise once more before it was blown. While it lasted it provided a very good means of testing our African soldiers in active service conditions, all of whom were total strangers to me and unknown quantities soldierwise.

The time had arrived now for me to brief the African element on the course with the true nature of the Regiment and get the final phase of their selection course under way.

Stretch Franklin, Basil Moss, Corporals Chibanda, Lamack and two *tame* ZANLA terrorists had meanwhile arrived at the camp, but were staying out of sight.

It was with some trepidation that I called the men together the next day . . . this was the moment of truth . . . literally. We simply could not afford, at this stage, for anyone to back out and perhaps spread the news back at their units as to exactly what our true role was to be.

They were all there . . . everyone who had passed the course . . . they all wanted to remain with the Selous Scouts . . . but would they still want to after my briefing?

I waited until they had sat down and made themselves comfortable.

'Two days ago,' I commenced, 'we went on an exercise which I tricked you into believing was the real thing . . . now I have to confess, I have deceived you again, but as it was with the *Zambian* operation this was also done for a very good reason.

Before I take you all into my confidence and tell you the main purpose of the Selous Scouts, I had to be absolutely certain of each man among you . . . that you were real men . . . and I can now confidently say I am very sure of that.'

I paused and watched a light of pride pass over their faces. I then continued.

'Most of you chaps have been on many operations and you know as well as I do the greatest problem we face is not in killing the terrorists . . . it's to first find them so we can bring them to contact . . . and then kill them.

We have all, I believe, experienced the frustrating difficulties in getting information from the local tribesmen who have been subverted by the terrorists. Now you are Africans . . . imagine the problems that all-European units, like the Rhodesian Light Infantry, are experiencing.

Now, we have discovered a new method of getting information from the subverted tribespeople . . . and you are the men who are going to get that information. You will not become . . . as you had believed . . . the Army trackers.

Instead, we are going to turn you into terrorists . . . freedom fighters . . . the boys in the bush . . . call them what you will . . . and you are going to be far better freedom fighters than the real ones ever were. You will have to be good because your lives will depend on just how good you are. You will pretend to be ZANLA and ZIPRA terrorists and infiltrate the population . . . you will infiltrate the circles of the terrorist sympathisers and form your own networks . . . and you will try to edge your way into the actual terrorist groups themselves. Now, perhaps you will understand why I was only looking for real men.'

There was a stunned silence and . . . before anyone could really recover their composure . . . I called for Basil Moss and the others to come in.

Basil Moss introduced the men with him and then, in pure and fluent Shona, spoke to them at some length . . . spelling out the tasks relating to the experimental teams . . . telling of the teams' experiences . . . their successes . . . their problems . . . and of those who had died already.

I watched the faces of his audience . . . they were absolutely spell-bound and . . . I knew that in spite of the obstructions put in my way by the Commanding Officer of the Rhodesian African Rifles and some of the Staff at Army Headquarters . . . the Selous Scouts had won the day.

While the selection courses had been in progress, I had spent many hours studying and analysing the work pioneered by the experimental teams.

I had spoken to both the black and the white operators . . . as the team members had become known . . . at great length . . . and I had spent many long hours in discussions with Winston Hart. The more I looked into the concept and turned over and discussed the almost endless possibilities, the more convinced did I become that we had in our hands the raw metal from which to forge a weapon of awesome potential.

In the Rhodesian context the value of pseudo operators had never been really seriously questioned . . . before operation *Hurricane* commenced . . . but except by a few far-sighted people it had never been seriously considered either. For, as has been said before, in the early days of insurgency in Rhodesia, from the early 1960's until ZANLA's time of preparation before the attack at Altena Farm in December, 1972, the need was not glaringly apparent . . . because no difficulty had been experienced by the Security Forces in closing with the terrorists.

The main incursions occurring before then had been mounted by the ZIPRA terrorists of Joshua Nkomo who had several times infiltrated across the Zambezi River from Zambia into the uninhabited areas of the Zambezi Valley.

They had been slammed and virtually decimated on their every attempt . . . whether they had been in small groups or even when their forces had been large and almost conventional in make-up. Inevitably, the results had been the same, with their groups being pounded and split up by both air strikes and the ground action of the Security Forces. The survivors were hunted down conventionally too . . . hunter/killer groups, ambush parties, observation points . . . were all deployed on rigidly designed programmes to pick up terrorist movement or to bump them.

It worked too because the infiltrators had no place to go. They had not *prepared* the people so they could merge with them in the classic manner as advocated by Mao Tse Tung. In his little red handbook . . . remarkable only for the vast amount of thinking he was supposed to have done, and which is now denied by his successors . . . he had made it clear that for a revolutionary guerilla to succeed, he must be able to merge with the local population in the same manner that a fish swims in water.

Joshua Nkomo and his lieutenants . . . who all along preferred the Russian haunch of black bear to the more subtle Red Chinese spring roll . . . had used their supposedly unconventional forces in a bluntly semi-conventional manner, ignoring the fish-swimming concept.

What they had clearly expected was for the whole indigenous population, once the news of their arrival flashed around the country by bush telegraph, to rise up in mass to shake off the shackles of white rule.

But it didn't happen . . . the peaceloving African people of that time, in the populated areas that ZIPRA did infiltrate, clearly viewed the idea of revolution with little enthusiasm. What was more, they fell over themselves to tell the Security Forces where the terrorists were . . . the friendly waters in which the ZIPRA fish were to swim, turned out to be inhabited by sharp-teethed otters . . . and the venue for *fishing* competitions where the catching of a terrorist fish won large prizes in the way of rewards for the locals.

So, in truth, in those early days of the war, the time was not ripe for the use of pseudo operators, except to be used, as they were by Special Branch in the Trojan horse concept, to infiltrate groups of terrorist recruits being sent by ZIPRA and ZANLA to Russia, Red China and elsewhere for training.

Nevertheless, it was all a question of foresight and there was little of that. But, the time came when they were needed to combat ZANLA. A time when, in spite of an apparently tranquil surface, common sense dictated there had to be a turmoil below . . . and that was before the *Hurricane* started to blow Rhodesia way.

If, when the ZANLA political commissars had first got to work establishing tenuous networks and *organising and politicising the masses* in Rhodesia's north east, they had found themselves up against pseudo gangs . . . so they didn't know friend from foe . . . they would have been halted in their tracks and forced to rethink.

The first serious attempt to evaluate the use of pseudo operators, working as a group, had taken place between the 24th October and the 4th November, 1966, in the wild bush at the confluence of the Lundi and Sabi Rivers in Rhodesia.

The officer instigating the course was Senior Assistant Commissioner Oppenheim, a far-sighted Criminal Investigation Department officer, who was humoured in his endeavours by his contemporaries and those senior to him.

'If Oppie wants to swan around in the bush . . . I guess we can go along with it . . .'

Passing on expertise was Lieutenant Spike Powell . . . who had served his pseudo apprenticeship in the Aberdare forests of Kenya, hunting Mau Mau . . . and . . . who was destined later to die in the second Air Rhodesia Viscount to be shot down by ZIPRA, using surface to air missiles, in the Muvuradona mountain range near Kariba.

From a bush survival point of view, the course was run by Lieutenant Alan Savoury, a Territorial Army officer, and a well-known ecologist in Southern Africa. He had been for some fourteen years, connected with various game departments in Central and Southern Africa and his opinions in this regard were listened to with respect. In later years he entered politics and was to become a member of the Rhodesian Parliament.

The men undergoing the course formed a fairly wide cross section and consisted of two European and two African members of the Special Branch, two European and two African members of the Criminal Investigation Department and four European members of the Special Air Service.

The course covered such general aspects of a guerilla's life, like living off edible fruits, roots and spinaches found in the bush and the breaking of civilized habits, like shaving, rising in the mornings at set times, smoking and drinking and so on.

It was mainly concerned with turning a European into an African . . . it ignored the African's natural advantage . . . he already was one.

For the finale of the training exercise, four ad hoc groups were made up from those present, comprising a European Policeman, an African Policeman and a member of the Special Air Service, and were put into an area of sixty square kilometres to track and hunt each other down, while being equipped with only a water bottle, a knife, a polythene sheet . . . no food whatsoever. The prime objective was to teach a man to live off the land.

The conclusions drawn at the end of the course were that the ideal pseudo group should consist of no more than three or four persons, but it is retrospectively clear, that the guerillas, those early pseudo operators were training to be, could have been generalised guerillas from anywhere in the world, rather than being particularly African, or more specifically, ZANLA or ZIPRA. No one, consequently, in those early days of inexperience had stopped to consider whether three or four people would be an ideal ZIPRA or ZANLA group.

So, in itself, it was the classic waste of time and that was all.

But, people always have to learn to crawl before they can walk, and the truth was that had the concept been pursued into operational reality . . . with the principle being incorporated, as a necessity, into counter insurgency concepts . . . those, what might seem now as inept amateur gropings, would have become totally professional as soon as experience, based on operational expediency, had become a reality. Unfortunately, Mr Oppenheim's vision was not shared by his colleagues of equal rank, nor by his seniors . . . so the whole thing died a natural death.

The provision of internal intelligence to military in all countries within the old British sphere of influence, has always been the responsibility of the Special Branch . . . which in itself, is a branch of the Police . . . and they, by established procedures, only feed military intelligence with what they feel they should know.

Military Intelligence in Rhodesia too was regarded with disdain by the Special Branch and treated very much as a poor relation. They relied exclusively on hand-me-downs from the Special Branch, and, in consequence, except during the latter stages of the war, when there was an improvement, Military Intelligence contributed nothing in the way of intelligence to the military commanders in the field.

The main sources of intelligence for the Rhodesian Special Branch came from a network of informers that their personnel personally ran, an even larger and thus perhaps more vital network of informers in the country areas run by the Uniformed Branch of the British South Africa Police, known as *ground coverage,* which was answerable in the ultimate to Special Branch, a lesser and certainly much less expert although similar system of *ground coverage* run by the Internal Affairs Department, and last, but certainly not by any means least, from captured terrorists or their helpers.

The running of informers or sources, as they are known in the trade, is a very tricky and specialised game, and its success depends not so much on the textbook knowledge of the officer running them, as on his expertise, calibre and something which can often only be described as his animal cunning or feel for what is, or is not happening. Basically sources are selected on an opportunity basis from persons an officer becomes acquainted with, more often than not, from the criminal and terrorist organisations with whom he obviously has the most dealings. Once selected, sources are carefully cultivated, the bait being money. Sometimes, in addition to money, and when it is thought the source is not being honest or coming up with as much intelligence as he should, the source's previous connections with the terrorists are made use of and incriminating information produced, which if exposed to the terrorists, would lead to an inevitable and painful death at their hands.

Sources are graded according to their reliability, but their information can only be accepted at face value after it has been assessed and evaluated. The best way of assessing reliability is by corroboration where other sources, unknown to each, have given the same or similar information.

Terrorist prisoners, immediately after capture, provided the best immediate and hottest up-to-the-minute intelligence, but the speed of the acquisition of such intelligence was governed by the time it took to make the prisoner talk, and was not always a quick process in the instance of a hard-core terrorist.

Once a terrorist group had become aware one of their number had been captured, they would immediately vacate their camp, change their routine and instruct the population to warn them of the approach of any Security Forces who were sure to make an appearance. So, unless a captive was speedily broken, and the intelligence quickly acted upon, the Security Forces gained nothing.

The problem for the military was that whilst Special Branch might be jubilant with some of the information gained from interrogation, the same information would leave the Army unmoved, because it was historical and could not be used to effect the killing of a terrorist . . . even though, we would learn later, it would be most useful in a briefing picture given to a pseudo group before deployment.

In spite of this it was still little use to a soldier to know where the terrorists were yesterday or even where they might be tomorrow, he needed to know where they were then, so that he could do something about it. And this in effect, was the fundamental problem – the acquisition of intelligence which could be immediately acted upon.

The intelligence problem was compounded when the terrorists had thoroughly intimidated and subverted the population in an area. In fact, an accurate guage of the degree of subversion present in an area was indicated by the degree of the drying up of informer information, which became absolute on many ocasions, particularly after the terrorists had resorted to disciplinary killings.

It was for the same reasons that the Special Branch in Malaya and Kenya had resorted to the use of pseudo terrorists and captured and turned terrorists to close with and wipe out the enemy.

The early experimental teams of Rabie and Franklin had clearly more than held their own in this sphere, but the significance of their ability to produce the best possible intelligence for immediate use by the Security Forces had been totally overlooked.

It was totally overlooked perhaps, because no one had ever thought it possible, before the

advent of the Selous Scouts, to use the same pseudo groups in the same area over and over again and still produce intelligence leading to contacts and kills.

We clearly could not continue using the standard pseudo techniques used in Malaya and Kenya, whereby terrorists were tricked into meetings and then immediately attacked. There were invariably survivors from contacts and we were well aware that news of our use of pseudo groups had already spread like wildfire.

Consequently, after considering all facets of the problem, my view firmly became that our pseudo terrorist groups should only resort to killing the terrorists into whose confidence they had wormed, only if they had suffered a compromise, or the prize was so extraordinarily great that it was worth the high cost of a compromise.

I decided therefore we should go for a complete change in tactics. The new role of the Selous Scouts, I instructed, would henceforth be to infiltrate the tribal population and the terrorist networks, pinpoint the terrorist camps and bases and then direct conventional forces in to carry out the actual attacks. Then, depending on the skill of the particular Selous Scouts' pseudo group concerned, their cover should remain intact which would enable them to continue operating in a particular area . . . perhaps indefinitely.

With this change in tactics, it became immediately imperative that we acquire, broaden and deepen the knowledge already available of the terrorist systems of organisation, training, administration and operation as well as their methods of organising and subverting the tribal population.

From captured terrorists we had learned that the terrorist hierarchy were already extremely perturbed about our pseudo activities and the precautions they had taken in order to expose us to the population as frauds, so as to reduce our effectiveness.

We had also learned that the terrorists had a fairly sophisticated chain of command and a system to regulate the movement of groups between the base areas in Mozambique and their operational areas in Rhodesia.

We soon became familiar with the ZANLA terrorist system of infiltrating and subverting an area. Political commissars accompanied by a small group would move through a tribal area calling the people to meetings where they would explain they were sons of Zimbabwe, who had volunteered to fight against the evil system of Government imposed upon the indigenous African people by the European, supported by puppets in the form of African government servants, soldiers, policemen and so on. The new war of *Chimurenga* . . . the old *Chimurenga* war being the native rebellion of 1896 . . . was about to begin. Its purpose was to oust the white man and return the country to its rightful owners . . . the black Africans.

Much play was made of the injustices, real and imagined, which had been inflicted upon the African peoples since the European had occupied the country in 1890. Comparisons of the extent of the land holdings of the European against the holdings of the African people were constantly made . . . the unfairness of the Europeans' opulence, their money, their large houses, their schools, their big cars and their smart clothes . . . all gained at the expense of the African people who had nothing and were suffering.

It was the old and easy call for revolution. The attractive call to the unsophisticated and poor *have nots* to grab and make over to their use the property and possessions of the *haves.*

The call to re-distribute wealth . . . to take it from those who would increase it, as in the biblical parable of the talents . . . and hand it to those who would do no more than consume it . . . in the same rapacious manner as a donkey eating carrots.

In return for their support, the ZANLA commissars solemnly promised the tribesmen that when ZANU came to power all the good things belonging to the white men would be theirs and all the irksome practices forced upon them by the District Commissioners, such as contour ridging of the ploughed lands – to stop the torrential African rains from washing the precious topsoil away down the rivers into the Indian Ocean . . . the dipping of cattle – to kill ticks and stop the spread of foot and mouth disease . . . and the paying of taxes and suchlike . . . would be abolished.

Life would return to the good old easy ways and days of their grandfathers and the Africans would once more be ruled by Africans in a Utopian society.

The ZANLA commissars also displayed their weapons to the people of the villages and told them there were thousands of freedom fighters . . . sons of the soil like them . . . just waiting for the right time to enter the country. But, before this could occur, they the commissars, had been sent to prepare the way and instruct the people so they would welcome the freedom fighters as the heroes they undoubtedly were.

Then would come the crunch as the commissars gave dire and clear warnings as what would happen to the villagers collectively, their village, family units or individual persons should anyone decide to become *sellouts* by reporting their presence to the authorities.

The people would then be invited to tell the commissars who the stooges and puppets of the government were amongst them and, in particular, who the Police informers were. They were also collectively ordered to indicate the families of serving soldiers and policemen and invariably the thoroughly frightened villagers would fall over themselves to comply. After all, who could be blamed in circumstances where the air was electric with threats of violence or horrible death, for not wishing to seem reluctant.

Sometimes a man, a wife, a mother or a father, or a whole family would be pushed to the front by the crowd and they would be publicly put to death by the commissars by beating, shooting, bayonetting or by being forced into their huts which would then be set ablaze. Sometimes the terrorist commissars, wishing to bind the tribesmen to them by a pact of blood, would order the villagers to kill the *sellouts* and *stooges* themselves.

After the blood-letting, an emotional experience indeed for anyone, let alone for unsophisticated tribesmen used to quiet and law-abiding pastoral lives, the meeting would end with an emotional address and rousing revolutionary *Chimurenga* songs which the terrorists taught the villagers and which the villagers, under pain of death, had to learn.

This change of strategy was finely put by Herbert Chitepo, at that time ZANU's national chairman, but destined later to die after his car detonated a landmine in the front drive of his Lusaka home, described this new *accept or take a bashing policy,* at ZANU's biennial conference in Lusaka during September, 1973.

'After politicising our people, it became easier for them to co-operate with us and to identify with our programme.' he said.

Afterwards, once they had irrevocably established their authority, the commissars would select and nominate various members of the population, usually people of established importance like chiefs, headmen or kraal-heads to be contactmen and *policemen.*

The contactmen and *policemen* played a vital role in the terrorist network and a chain of these men was gradually created until they stretched from inside Mozambique to the furthermost reaches of the operational areas. The establishment of the contactmen particularly, was designed to circumvent the activities of the Selous Scouts' pseudo gangs in a simple but ingenious way.

By order of the terrorists, it became and was the duty of every person in the tribal trust land concerned, to pass every scrap of information relating to the Security Forces to the local contactman, who in turn, would speedily pass this on to the terrorists. In addition to collating intelligence the contactmen were responsible for the selection of bases, the collection and provision of food for the terrorists, the transmission of letters and messages between detachments and sections, and the arranging and setting up of security procedures for meetings between various groups, sections and detachments, which security procedures became progressively more involved and complex as the successes of the Selous Scouts pseudo operations mounted.

The *policemen* worked with and under the contactmen and were responsible for maintaining the terrorists' system of *law and order.* They could not however, discipline or punish anyone themselves. Any suspected *sellout* or other person who appeared to be a threat to the ZANLA cause would be taken by them to the local terrorist leader who would decide and mete out the punishment, which was usually death, but might sometimes be severe and awful mutilation.

The contactmen and *policemen* were later supplemented or even supplanted, as the war progressed, by the *mujiba* system. The word *mujiba* is believed to have come from the word *mujibva*, a Slavic word meaning the people who were too young to join Marshal Tito's Jugoslavian communist guerilla forces in World War-2, but who could still act as their ears and eyes, or as messengers or go-betweens with the civil population. The duties of the Rhodesian *mujiba's* followed more or less the same lines, but they were of any age from the very young to dotage, unlike their Slavic counterparts.

Once an area had been subverted to the satisfaction of the ZANLA commissar and the initial system of contactmen and *policemen* nominated and installed, he would return to Mozambique and report the area was ready to be *occupied.*

The ZANLA High Command in Mozambique would then work out section boundaries, appoint commanders and nominate men who would be responsible for the prosecution of the war in the area concerned.

The overall commander of the sector, who would be based inside Rhodesia, would be a Sectorial Commander who could, roughly speaking, be equated to a Brigadier as regards operational command. He was responsible for implementing the directives of the ZANLA High Command through his Provincial Commander who would be rear-based inside Mozambique.

Below the Sectorial Commander in the chain of command, would come the Detachment Commanders, each of whom would be in charge of an area, usually fairly large, known as a Detachment Area. Detachment Commanders, in their turn, were responsible for carrying out the instructions of the Sectorial Commander and were required to meet with him once per month to discuss any new developments and receive instructions regarding fresh operational requirements.

Below the Detachment Commanders would be a varying number of sections, led by Section Commanders, normally comprising eight to ten men who would be the soldiers in the field.

Both the Sectorial and Detachment commanders stayed almost continually on the move, visiting subordinates to ensure that the war was being prosecuted to the utmost. In the interests of safety, some Sectorial Commanders preferred to site their headquarter bases over the border in Mozambique and operate from there, but the bases of Detachment Commanders were almost always found in the opeational areas.

And so, by these methods, Mao Tse Tung's dictum that to be successful, a guerilla must move through the population as a fish does through water, was satisfied by ZANLA. And it was this, in those early stages of the intensified war, that had effectively neutralised the Rhodesian military action against the terrorists.

I went to see General Walls and up-dated him on the latest development, which he listened to with considerable interest. He was particularly pleased to hear of the good progress we were making with the selection and training of the troops.

When I had first agreed to take on the job of forming the Selous Scouts in November, 1973, Army Headquarters' estimate of the earliest possible time we could become operational was the end of July or the beginning of August, 1974, but we were now in a position to have 2-Troop, the first of the new troops, operational by the 2nd of January. 3-Troop which was already at Makuti undergoing training would be ready for deployment by the 25th of February. 1-Troop, which I planned as a combination of men who had newly passed the selection course and the old experimental teams, should be ready to go into the field by the 25th of March.

Army Headquarters, although I had warned them of these much advanced timings, clearly did not believe me and had made no provision for a temporary base camp to accommodate the Regiment, until our Inkomo Barracks were ready.

The Makuti camp, which we already had, while fine for training purposes was too far away from the operational area and, in any event, there were insufficient facilities there to cater for the size of the Regiment. Besides, even if facilities were provided there, I still didn't want men undergoing training living cheek by jowl with the operational soldiers and consequently

becoming aware of the type of operations we were conducting, before we had decided they were suitable for acceptance in the Regiment.

We had to go somewhere, so I asked Quartermaster's Branch at Army Headquarters to at least gather together tentage, cooking and toilet requirements for our immediate needs, so I could set up a bush-camp somewhere in the operational area. I immediately drove to Bindura to discuss future operations with Superintendent McGuinness and also to seek his help in finding a site to use as a temporary base, but he was still in the process of handing over his old job to the new incumbent, as well as recruiting Special Branch personnel for his new job, so I sought out Winston Hart.

After some discussions and a further visit to the farm where the experimental team was based, we concluded it would be adequate as a temporary bush camp and we would not need to seek a further area.

I sent for Colour-Sergeant Pat Miller, the Regimental Administration Officer . . . the Special Air Service had a captain . . . and we together pegged out lines to mark where the accommodation tents should be erected. Afterwards, we drew up a detailed plan of the site and noted the numbers and size of concrete bases on which we would erect the tents when they arrived.

Winston Hart and I then returned to Bindura and had a conference with Brigadier Hickman, his Brigade Major and his Brigade Intelligence Officer, discussing areas of concern and deciding which merited priority of deployment. During the course of discussions I mentioned to Brigadier Hickman that it was likely we might be faced with an accommodation problem at the farm camp, if the Quartermaster's Branch did not deliver our accommodation stores on time and, if we were delayed by this, it could adversely affect our deployment timings.

The Brigadier agreed and promised to add his muscle to mine to ensure that everything was completed well ahead of schedule. He particularly mentioned that he certainly saw no reason why the temporary camp shouldn't be ready well in advance of 2-Troop's completion of their training course.

An officer in the Quartermaster's Branch at Army Headquarters, whom I knew well, gave me the same bland reassurances.

Being finally satisfied that everything was in hand and up to schedule, I drove to Makuti and found the situation there highly satisfactory too. 2-Troop's pseudo training was on the brink of completion and the instructors were well satisfied with the calibre of the men and the high standard of training achieved.

In their collective opinions all that was necessary now was for the new men to be deployed into the operational area, with experienced men of the experimental teams in command positions, so they could gain the necessary on-the-job experience.

After a short discussion I agreed with them and in spite of my original intention of keeping most of the experimental teams together in 1-Troop, I decided instead, to share them out between the new troops, so no time was wasted in gaining knowledge or experience which was already known or to hand.

A few days after my arrival, 2-Troop had a monumental passing-out party, after which, they were all returned to their parent units for twenty days for transfer formalities to be completed, and thereafter, to report to the Bindura farm camp ready to commence operational duties.

3-Troop too were nearly through their selection course which we had altered in some facets as a result of lessons learned from the first course. The indications here too were that the calibre of the men . . . both African and European . . . was of a high standard and that I could look forward to an extremely good pass-rate.

While looking at things at Makuti I took the opportunity to go down to Kariba to check on tracker training at the Army Tracking Wing, now part of my command. I had been there once before to give them an initial briefing, but I hadn't inspected things in-depth, so this time I took the opportunity to take a good look at things.

I was not at all impressed with what I saw. There was no properly organised training syllabus

(Combination of top politic

MILITARY HIGH COMMAND – OTHER
(Based externally and hea

ZZ PROVINCE
(Zambia/Zimbabwe)

RUBATSIRO SECTOR
Used but later folded as right of rear bases was withdrawn by Zambia

BZ PROVINCE
(Botswana/Zimbabwe)
No rear bases allowed by Botswana so never used

MMZ PROVINCE
(Mozambique/Zimbabwe)
Started as one Province but was later split into three – Tete, Manica and Gaza

TETE PROVINCE
Provincial Field Operations Commander (PFOC)
Provincial Field Political Commissioner (PFPC)
Provincial Field Intelligence Officer (PFSIO)
Provincial Field Medical Officer (PFMO)

MA
Provincial Field C
Provincial Field P
Provincial Field In
Provincial Field M

NEHANDA SECTOR
Sectorial Operations Commander (SOC)
Sectorial Political Commissar (SPC)
Sectorial Security Officer (SSO)
Sectorial Logistics Officer (SLO)
Sectorial Medical Officer (SMO)

To DETACHMENT COMMANDS – Numbers of which varied, each with:
Detachment Commander (DC)
Detachment Political Commissar (DPC)
Detachment Security Officer (DSO)
Detachment Logistics Officer (DLO)
Detachment Medical Officer (DMO)

To SECTION COMMANDS – Numbers of which varied, each with:
Section Commander (SC) *Logistics Officer (LO)
Political Commissar (PC) *Medical Officer (MO)
Security Officer (SO)

TANGWENA SECTOR
Sectorial Operations Commander (SOC)
Sectorial Political Commissar (SPC)
Sectorial Security Officer (SSO)
Sectorial Logistics Officer (SLO)
Sectorial Medical Officer (SMO)

To DETACHMENT COMMANDS – Numbers of which varied, each
Detachment Commander (DC)
Detachment Political Commissar (DPC)
Detachment Security Officer (DSO)
Detachment Logistics Officer (DLO)
Detachment Medical Officer (DMO)

To SECTION COMMANDS – Numbers of which varied, each with:
Section Commander (SC) *Logistics Officer (
Political Commissar (PC) *Medical Officer (M
Security Officer (SO)

CHAMINUKA SECTOR
Sectorial Operations Commander (SOC)
Sectorial Political Commissar (SPC)
Sectorial Security Officer (SSO)
Sectorial Logistics Officer (SLO)
Sectorial Medical Officer (SMO)

To DETACHMENT COMMANDS – Numbers of which varied, each with:
Detachment Commander (DC)
Detachment Political Commissar (DPC)
Detachment Security Officer (DSO)
Detachment Logistics Officer (DLO)
Detachment Medical Officer (DMO)

To SECTION COMMANDS – Numbers of which varied, each with:
Sections Commander (SC) *Logistics Officer (LO)
Political Commissar (PC) *Medical Officer (MO)
Security Officer (SO)

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Sectorial Opera
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Sectorial Logist
Sectorial Medic

To DETACHMENT COMMANI
Detachment Commander
Detachment Political Comm
Detachment Security Office
Detachment Logistics Offic
Detachment Medical Office

To SECTION COMMANDS –
Section Commander (S
Political Commissar (P
Security Officer (S

TAKAWIRA SECTOR
Sectorial Operations Commander (SOC)
Sectorial Political Commissar (SPC)
Sectorial Security Officer (SSO)
Sectorial Logistics Officer (SLO)
Sectorial Medical Officer (SMO)

To DETACHMENT COMMANDS – Numbers of which varied, each with:
Detachment Commander (DC)
Detachment Political Commissar (DPC)
Detachment Security Officer (DSO)
Detachment Logistics Officer (DLO)
Detachment Medical Officer (DMO)

To SECTION COMMANDS – Numbers of which varied, each with:
Section Commander (SC) *Logistics Officer (LO)
Political Commissar (PC) *Medical Officer (MO)
Security Officer (SO)

CHITEPO SECTOR
Sectorial Operations Commander (SOC)
Sectorial Political Commissar (SPC)
Sectorial Security Officer (SSO)
Sectorial Logistics Officer (SLO)
Sectorial Medical Officer (SMO)

To DETACHMENT COMMANDS – Numbers of which varied, each with:
Detachment Commander (DC)
Detachment Political Commissar (DPC)
Detachment Security Officer (DSO)
Detachment Logistics Officer (DLO)
Detachment Medical Officer (DMO)

To SECTION COMMANDS – Numbers of which varied, each with:
Section Commander (SC) *Logistics Officer (LO)
Political Commissar (PC) *Medical Officer (MO)
Security Officer (SO)

* If size warranted

ANISATION

personnel based externally)

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INCE
ommander (PFOC)
missioner (PFPC)
Officer (PFSIO)
er (PFMO)

GAZA PROVINCE
Provincial Field Operations Commander (PFOC)
Provincial Field Political Commissioner (PFPC)
Provincial Field Intelligence Officer (PFSIO)
Provincial Field Medical Officer (PFMO)

MUSIKAVANHU SECTOR
Sectorial Operations Commander (SOC)
Sectorial Political Commissar (SPC)
Sectorial Security Officer (SSO)
Sectorial Logistics Officer (SLO)
Sectorial Medical Officer (SMO)

DETACHMENT COMMANDS – Numbers of which varied, each with:
Detachment Commander (DC)
Detachment Political Commissar (DPC)
Detachment Security Officer (DSO)
Detachment Logistics Officer (DLO)
Detachment Medical Officer (DMO)

SECTION COMMANDS – Numbers of which varied, each with:
Section Commander (SC) *Logistics Officer (LO)
Political Commissar (PC) *Medical Officer (MO)
Security Officer (SO)

SECTOR 4
Sectorial Operations Commander (SOC)
Sectorial Political Commissar (SPC)
Sectorial Security Officer (SSO)
Sectorial Logistics Officer (SLO)
Sectorial Medical Officer (SMO)

To DETACHMENT COMMANDS – Numbers of which varied, each with:
Detachment Commander (DC)
Detachment Political Commissar (DPC)
Detachment Security Officer (DSO)
Detachment Logistics Officer (DLO)
Detachment Medical Officer (DMO)

To SECTION COMMANDS – Numbers of which varied, each with:
Section Commander (SC) *Logistics Officer (LO)
Political Commissar (PC) *Medical Officer (MO)
Security Officer (SO)

SECTOR
nander (SOC)
ar (SPC)
(SSO)
(SLO)
(SMO)

ers of which varied, each with:
DC)
PC)
SO)
LO)
MO)

which varied, each with:
Logistics Officer (LO)
Medical Officer (MO)

SECTOR 3
Sectorial Operations Commander (SOC)
Sectorial Political Commissar (SPC)
Sectorial Security Officer (SSO)
Sectorial Logistics Officer (SLO)
Sectorial Medical Officer (SMO)

To DETACHMENT COMMANDS – Numbers of which varied, each with:
Detachment Commander (DC)
Detachment Political Commissar (DPC)
Detachment Security Officer (DSO)
Detachment Logistics Officer (DLO)
Detachment Medical Officer (DMO)

To SECTION COMMANDS – Numbers of which varied, each with:
Section Commander (SC) *Logistics Officer (LO)
Political Commissar (PC) *Medical Officer (MO)
Security Officer (SO)

SECTOR 2
Sectorial Operations Commander (SOC)
Sectorial Political Commissar (SPC)
Sectorial Security Officer (SSO)
Sectorial Logistics Officer (SLO)
Sectorial Medical Officer (SMO)

To DETACHMENT COMMANDS – Numbers of which varied, each with:
Detachment Commander (DC)
Detachment Political Commissar (DPC)
Detachment Security Officer (DSO)
Detachment Logistics Officer (DLO)
Detachment Medical Officer (DMO)

To SECTION COMMANDS – Numbers of which varied, each with:
Section Commander (SC) *Logistics Officer (LO)
Political Commissar (PC) *Medical Officer (MO)
Security Officer (SO)

SECTOR 1
Sectorial Operations Commander (SOC)
Sectorial Political Commissar (SPC)
Sectorial Security Officer (SSO)
Sectorial Logistics Officer (SLO)
Sectorial Medical Officer (SMO)

To DETACHMENT COMMANDS – Numbers of which varied, each with:
Detachment Commander (DC)
Detachment Political Commissar (DPC)
Detachment Security Officer (DSO)
Detachment Logistics Officer (DLO)
Detachment Medical Officer (DMO)

To SECTION COMMANDS – Numbers of which varied, each with:
Section Commander (SC) *Logistics Officer (LO)
Political Commissar (PC) *Medical Officer (MO)
Security Officer (SO)

L2. Organisation of ZANLA showing chain of command. The war tentatively first commenced in Rubatsiro Sector, which was abandoned when Zambia withdrew rear-base facilities. Thereafter, they commenced operations in December, 1972, in their Nehanda, Chaminuka and Takawira Sectors, which roughly equated with the *Hurricane* operational area. Positions of all ZANLA Sectors as they were at the war's end are shown on map L17.

Compiled by
FRANCIS LATEGAN

or, even laid down daily programmes . . . each instructor simply did his own thing in his own way as he saw best . . . and each of them had different ideas.

The students undergoing courses at the Tracking School were housed in brick and air-conditioned accommodation in the Army Barracks at Kariba, and the daily procedure was for them to leave each morning by transport for the outskirts of Kariba where they would spend the day tracking. Then sometime, around 16h00 to 17h00, they would climb back in their transport and return to Kariba for an evening of festivities in the casinos and bars.

Having appraised myself of this most unsatisfactory state of affairs, I then and there arranged some adjustments in the staffings and afterwards called together those remaining and told them the way things were going to be run in the future.

Firstly, I told them they were henceforth to be responsible for the full gambit of training, incorporating all the military subjects which I required the Selous Scouts to be well versed in, as well as the pseudo training, and that this would be in addition to the training of trackers for the whole Army.

I told them that when a selection course was to be run, I would call-up men of the Tracker Combat Unit to assist as tracking instructors if they were short.

The Tracker Combat Unit, composed entirely of Territorial Army soldiers, had also been handed over to the Selous Scouts. Until then they'd also been administered by the School of Infantry, Gwelo, whose responsibility it had been to call-up Territorial Army Tracker teams and despatch them to the operational area on a rotational basis, to be based at Joint Operational Command and used on follow-ups, and so forth.

I told the Tracking Wing staff they would also take over the direct responsibility for the training, administration and call-up of all Tracker Combat Unit personnel who would, henceforth lose that name and become an integral part of the Selous Scouts, but who would still purely be employed upon tracking duties.

I stressed that tracking was to provide the basis of the cover for our top secret operations and that if this cover was to be anywhere near successful, every Selous Scout had to clearly be seen by everyone as a master bushman. So it had to be a genuine cover . . . not one which could easily be seen through.

Makuti had been intended as a temporary training area only, and I then told them that I had already arranged with the Department of Wild Life for us to be given a long lease to a very large area of land running north-eastwards from a point touching the shore on Lake Kariba. I ordered that a bush camp be immediately established there and that in future, students attending tracking courses, would not be allowed to even visit the Kariba township . . . but would stay in the bush, living completely under active service conditions.

'If you want to produce a bushman,' I said, 'you cannot do it in town . . . get them back to nature . . .'

In a short time a picturesque thatched camp was erected on Kariba's lake shore. At the same time the whole syllabus at the Tracking Wing was reviewed and a fresh one, aimed solely on producing trackers and bushmen, was introduced.

I put a Colour-Sergeant in command of the School and he was thoroughly dedicated and orientated towards the new look I wanted and, having done this, I was confident I could then concentrate on operations, feeling happy that things at Kariba would be running smoothly and in the way I wanted it to.

Before departing I gave orders for the whole of the Tracker Combat Unit . . . some ninety Territorial Army personnel, to be called up for a camp.

All of them, I said, were to be re-tested and re-graded in tracking techniques and a list compiled of any found unsuitable, so I could arrange for them to be posted to other units.

Those who remained were to be immediately badged as Selous Scouts, but any Territorial Army man who wished to join the Selous Scouts afterwards, would have to undergo and pass the selection course, which would be identical to that undergone by regular troops except they would not undergo pseudo training and neither would they be told anything about it.

I drafted and signed a circular letter which I ordered be sent to every man in the Tracker Combat Unit, introducing myself and telling them of the formation of the Selous Scouts. I made the point of stressing that, in the new Regiment, a Territorial soldier would not be regarded as a second-class citizen to a regular . . . it was the brown beret and the badge which would count and every man who passed a selection course and earned the right to wear it was equal in my eyes, whether he be brown, black, white, regular or Territorial Army soldier.

I must own up that I was not particularly enthralled at the idea of taking Territorial Army soldiers on Selous Scouts' strength, because at that time, with the need for stringent secrecy, I could see little use for them within the main concept envisaged for the Regiment . . . although I could clearly see the advantages of using them to create an effective cover to conceal our true role. However, afterwards, once we had re-trained and assimilated the Territorial Army men . . . and got many more as the scope of the regiment broadened to include external raids . . . they proved themselves top class soldiers and carried out many fine operations both internally and externally. Indeed, in the hard years of war which were to follow, I daily thanked my lucky stars for having the services of such fine fighting men.

Having brought into the realms of the Army Tracking Wing the training of future Selous Scouts and on satisfying myself the selection courses were still going as planned at Makuti, I drove happily back to Bindura via Salisbury. I was in no hurry because I was certain the camp at Bindura had been completed, after the assurances I had received, so I did not bother to make a cautionary check at Army Headquarters. But, when I reached the farm, I met with a nasty surprise.

Pat Miller was in a state of despair.

'Where the bloody hell is the camp?' I asked succinctly.

The farmhouse and what had been there before was still there . . . but . . . nothing had been added.

'I telephoned Army Headquarters repeatedly . . . but . . . they professed not to even know what I was talking about,' Pat Miller told me.

I stormed into the farmhouse, which fortunately had a telephone, and got through to each responsible department at Army Headquarters in turn, commencing with the Quartermasters' Branch, using the choicest of language my tongue could lay touch to, advising them what was likely to happen should the tents and the concrete not arrive by the next day at the latest.

I then drove across to Bindura to see Brigadier Hickman and told him what the position was. As soon as I had told him, he got on to Army Headquarters and for a few moments the telephone lines grew red-hot.

The following morning a whole convoy of lorries arrived at the farm carrying everything that was needed and, by everyone working flat-out, the camp area was made ready for the imminent arrival of the men of 2-Troop . . . and it was ready in time . . . but it was a close run thing.

Once we had settled into this camp, it turned out to be a very pleasant place for the interim and very handy to the Joint Operational Command too . . . but it could only be temporary because of the security problems inherent in being near Bindura, as previously outlined.

PART 3

Operations Begin
1974

2-Troop Commence Operations: January, 1974

2-Troop Selous Scouts assembled at the Bindura farm camp, having cleared from their Units, and preparations were immediately put into motion for their maiden deployment. Although they had been stiffened with experienced men from the existing nucleus, I still decided it was wiser they first be deployed into an area relatively free from terrorists, so that they could gain experience and find their feet. It followed too, that if their inexperience compromised them, it would have little effect on future operations.

I withdrew them after twenty days of operation to see what had been achieved. From the debrief it became apparent it was rapidly becoming widely known in the operational area that the Security Forces were masquerading as terrorists. This made it even more fortunate that we had picked areas relatively free from terrorists for the trial run, as the men had experienced little difficulty in convincing the tribesmen they were the genuine ZANLA article. At the same time, it must be stressed that although they had been surprised and relieved at the ease with which they were accepted, they were, at the same time, shocked and disillusioned at the wild, sometimes ecstatic, receptions that ZANLA was getting.

Working outwards towards the terrorist periphery they had acquired valuable detail on terrorist procedures and systems, and this information, coupled with that gained from interrogations of recently captured terrorists, began to fill in the everchanging jigsaw puzzle of exactly how the ZANLA terrorists and their network of tribal sympathisers was currently operating.

The Special Branch officer at the Centenary Joint Operational Command, had very little, if any, knowledge on this aspect, so in a spirit of co-operation I ordered our reports to be made available to him. This proved to be a costly mistake on my part for which the Selous Scouts were to pay dearly, for, armed with this hot information, the officer concerned immediately arranged the pick-up and interrogation of all the contactmen we had identified and passed on to him.

The kind of questions asked, coupled with being confronted by a detailed schedule of visits from *terrorists* . . . in fact the Selous Scouts . . . made the identity of their visitors obvious to the contactmen. The effects were disastrous . . . it meant it was impossible, ever again, to use the same Selous Scouts in the area . . . they were well and truly blown.

To make matters worse, the subsequent conviction and imprisonment of the arrested contactmen for offences relating to terrorism, meant that we could not even introduce another pseudo group into the area through the same contactmen, because they were no longer there.

It was a total write-off of twenty days of painstaking work and a large potential reservoir of useful counter-terrorist intelligence was thrown to the winds . . . all, presumably, because an ambitious Special Branch officer wished to produce some criminal convictions so he could earn the praise of his superiors.

The consequence was that we never again made such information available. This, in its turn, aroused bitter antagonism towards the Selous Scouts by some members of the Special Branch in the operational area who were not directly working with the Scouts, which did nothing to better the efficient prosecution of the war.

Dale Collett's group, the old experimental team, was deployed into the Kandeya Tribal Trust Lands north of Mount Darwin. In a very short time they had gained the confidence of the Kandeya tribesmen and, without too many problems, were able to convince the local ZANLA contactman that they were an incoming terrorist group.

The results were spectacular . . . they proved too we were on the right track . . . he had a direct pinpoint of a camp which, information said, contained twelve terrorists.

It was our first potential success and we had to be sure. It was vital nothing went off at half-cock, so Dale and his men spent the whole of the night of the 23rd–24th February, performing a close-in reconnaissance, checking the information and confirming the map co-ordinates.

Final confirmation was flashed to me by radio at first light at my operations room, of corrugated iron and asbestos, where I had spent a restless and anxious night.

I had eagerly been awaiting something like this . . . because I had been anxious to test my theory of using the Selous Scouts on the ground, to radio talk-in a Fireforce onto a terrorist group . . . so they could preserve their cover with the locals and continue operating there.

I had some anxieties though, for the question wasn't just hypothetical . . . if it didn't work, a group of ZANLA terrorists would likely be alive, well and still operating at the end of it.

I called the Rhodesian Light Infantry Fireforce standing by at Mount Darwin, and gave them a comprehensive briefing . . . my ideas had been discussed with them previously, and they too were as keen as mustard that the idea should work, as it would certainly give them more opportunities to close with the enemy and achieve kills.

'Get weaving,' I said at the end of my briefing.

Dale took up a position on high ground overlooking the camp. He established radio contact and gave the heliborne Fireforce commander an in-flight briefing, while the sounds of their turbo jet engines were still too far away to give an indication to the terrorists of their impending doom.

Under Dale's skilled direction the troops were brought in and landed precisely on target . . . by 09h00 the battle was over. Six terrorists were killed and another, who was badly wounded, captured.

More importantly . . . we had a new concept of operation . . . and it worked.

The weapons and equipment captured were gratefully taken over by us for issue to future Selous Scouts. It was however, the documents which proved the most important. ZANLA terrorists, lacking radio communication, had to make do with courier-borne letters as their only means of communication. So, of necessity, they had become prolific letter-writers and great keepers of logs and diaries, and these, when they fell into our hands, gave us an immediate and comprehensive picture of the local terrorist network, details of their groups, the locations of their camps, their contactmen, their intended future plans, passwords and a host of other routine information, which would enable us to become more authentic in our deadly serious game of hide and seek.

Letters in particular were of high practical use to us, for it was a relatively simple matter for the Special Branch to forge letters of introduction which we could use to gain entry into an area.

They were also valuable as bait for luring terrorist groups into ambushes, or to spread alarm and despondency by complaining bitterly of the high state of efficiency of the Security Forces, citing spurious contacts and casualties and criticising the terrorist High Command for their *don't care* attitude towards the high casualty rate amongst *cadres* . . . as the ZANLA terrorists called their rank and file . . . in the field.

The very badly wounded capture almost immediately revealed under interrogation, the system which was followed after a ZANLA group had been in contact with the Security Forces. The survivors would immediately vacate their area of operations and stay away until the Security Forces had left and tribal life had settled back to normal. But, if a member was known to have been captured, they would stay away even longer, and might perhaps even move to another area altogether. From this, it was apparent that if Dale and his men remained in the area and tried to pretend they were survivors from the contact, they would immediately fall under suspicion, so I withdrew them.

The contact gave the Security Forces their biggest kill to date in the *Hurricane* operational area, which boosted the Army's morale no end, as until then, they had tasted little of success.

But it was only the beginning . . . much more would come.

A fresh briefing was prepared by Winston Hart, and on the 4th May, Dale Collett and his men were sent back into the field, this time into the Madziwa Tribal Trust Land.

At 03h00 on the 6th May, only two days later, I was called to the radio in the operations room. Dale, in a hoarse whisper, reported locating a camp of twenty terrorists and, according to his information, the terrorists mustered daily at the late time of 08h00 when they were given their jobs for the day by the commander. He added that the terrorists' camp lay close-in to the huts of a large village, which made it impossible for him to remain nearby to direct the Security Force attack, as his presence would certainly be noticed.

I called up the Rhodesian Light Infantry and the Air Force and discussed various options open to us. After some discussion, we decided the most fruitful plan would be to lay on an air-strike at first light, followed immediately by a helicopter-borne Fireforce of the Rhodesian Light Infantry to mop up the survivors.

At the request of the Air Force I called Dale up and asked him if he could possibly lay out a fluorescent panel on the camp's outskirts, to act as a marker for the bombing run.

There was a long pregnant pause. 'Okay,' he said finally, 'I'll give it a bash.'

It was a risky business indeed and everyone knew it, but an hour later he came back on the air and confirmed the panel was in position and that he had moved out.

The air-strike was scheduled for immediately after first light because of the very considerable danger of the marker panel being stumbled on by a terrorist clearance patrol. But at dawn our hearts dropped . . . the target area was shrouded by a thick blanket of mist.

At 07h00 it lifted and the Air Force went in, but the strike aircraft overshot the target, as Dale had placed the panel too close to the camp. It banked, turned around and made another run-in, but the terrorists below had been alerted. According to a wounded terrorist captured afterwards, all twenty terrorists there had been formed up and were ready for roll call when the aircraft screamed in low overhead and they scattered in every direction.

The Rhodesian Light Infantry went in and killed two terrorists and captured a third during their sweep. They brought back too an extremely large haul of useful terrorist documents.

At the debrief afterwards, the Air Force requested that in any future operations, marker panels should be laid out at least eight hundred metres from the target in order to give the pilot time to carry out his pre-strike drills. It was a great pity we only learned this after the event, for not only had our lack of knowledge spoiled a potentially very large kill, but Dale too had put himself at considerable risk by unnecessarily creeping close to the target to lay out his panel.

Dale and his men were withdrawn for the debrief, then redeployed once again into the Kandeya Tribal Trust Land.

During the late evening of the 16th May, Dale once again came up on the radio and reported his men had received reports from various sources, that an extremely large number of ZANLA terrorists would be meeting together the following morning to discuss strategy and tactics.

Unfortunately, he was unable to supply an exact fix on the meeting place.

I immediately alerted the Brigade Commander who made arrangements to have the heliborne Fireforce of the Rhodesian Light Infantry based at Centenary, flown to Mount Darwin at first light . . . a matter of thirty minutes flying time.

I waited impatiently as the new day dawned, but the radio stayed silent.

Then, at 08h00 Dale called us up. He hadn't got an accurate fix on the meeting place and he was still some twelve kilometres away from the general area. The best he could give was a four figure grid reference . . . a square of a thousand metres by a thousand metres . . . the meeting was apparently already in progress near a certain Ruwani School . . . but more than that he couldn't say with any certainty.

Ruwani School too was not marked on the map.

I duly passed Dale's comments on to the Headquarters of the Rhodesian Light Infantry, who understandably, were somewhat dubious as to its accuracy, particularly when I told them my man was sited some twelve kilometres away from the target. Despite this they decided to give it a try and their Fireforce took off for the grid square we had indicated.

The first intimation that it was to be anything other than a routine air-sweep, with a collective shrug of the shoulders at the end of it, was a sudden startled exclamation from one of the chopper pilots which came over the monitoring set in the operations room.

'Hell . . . just look at those terrs down there.'

The helicopters dropped down and a running contact, spread over a huge area, ensued as the terrorists bombshelled; but at the conclusion of the contact, nineteen terrorists lay dead, while seven others had been captured.

From the captives, it transpired that fifty-six terrorists were attending the meeting when the Security Force helicopters arrived.

The heliborne Fireforce was very much a new concept at that time, and the helicopters were armed only with one medium machinegun for self protection, so the results were very good, particularly when one considers that in war the rate of wounded to kills is calculated at three to one, which made the probability high that further terrorists wounded in the contact died later, alone in the bush.

After this considerable success, a re-think of the heliborne troop concept took place at a high level. Until then, the Air Force had made it clear to the Army that the helicopter was not considered as an offensive weapon, but purely as a means of transport for moving troops by expeditious means into a potential contact area.

'Helicopters are hellishly expensive . . . helicopters are too difficult to replace because of a shortage of foreign exchange . . . helicopters are hard to get because of United Nations' sanctions . . .'

Security Force tactics were still, up to that time, the old one of flooding the operational area with small groups of patrolling troops, each with a tracker. If fresh tracks were found or a contact made with the enemy, stop forces would be helicoptered in and positioned to best advantage together with reinforcements if they were needed.

Once this had been achieved, the helicopters would be withdrawn to safety, while the troops fought it out with the terrorists on the ground.

Overall control would be maintained by the local military commander, either from his operations room by radio, or if it were possible, from a light fixed-wing aircraft overflying the contact area.

In some areas of the country, helicopters had been positioned singly with the express task of dropping off patrols into areas inaccessible to vehicles, and for casualty evacuation.

When, by June, 1973, the war had spread from Centenary to the Mount Darwin area, it was decided to cease the practice of splitting helicopter strengths into penny packets, and to group them strategically at Mount Darwin and Centenary where a company of infantry . . . a Commando in the case of the Rhodesian Light Infantry . . . would be based on permanent standby as reaction forces.

It didn't take long before these groupings of helicopters and troops became known as Fireforces.

But, it was the battle near Ruwani School which sparked the change in Air Force thinking and to the delight of the Army and the very aggressive helicopter pilots, it was also decided to mount a twenty millimetre cannon in every fifth helicopter as an offensive weapon and to fit each troop-carrying helicopter with twin MAG's of Belgian manufacture.

The cannon soon proved to be a deadly contribution to combat and it was for good reason the helicopters mounting these weapons became known as K-Cars . . . the *K* standing very definitely for kills.

The Security Forces were once again in a dominant position now they had the Selous Scouts to pinpoint targets. On top of that they had a newly re-vamped and totally devastating weapon of war . . . the Fireforce . . . a keenly honed cutting edge designed to bring the terrorist targets we located to successful contact.

Some ten days after the Ruwani School contact, Stretch Franklin, based with his men on the Ruya River north of Mount Darwin, identified another target for Fireforce. In the ensuing

battle, a further twenty-six terrorists were brought to contact and killed by the Rhodesian Light Infantry.

Successful contacts were becoming a habit ... in the space of ten days, fifty-two ZANLA terrorists had been killed ... it was, until then, an unheard of total.

They call us *Skuz'apo*

Shona, as with all African languages, is earthy and richly idiomatic, as white men who are born in or adopt Africa soon find out. Nicknames, when awarded by Africans to white men or their institutions, which is usual and commonplace, are invariably pointed in meaning and carry the barbed truth of a political cartoonist.

So it was when we learned the nickname the terrorists had for the Selous Scouts ... *Skuz'apo.*

'Skuz,' is a corruption of the English, *excuse me,* while *apo* is the Shona word for *here* in the immediate sense. Thus, in direct translation *Skuz'apo* might mean: *excuse me here* ... or: *excuse me for what I have just done.*

Idiomatically speaking though, the meaning was more oblique. Imagine being in a smoky hall, the venue of a boxing match, crowded with spectators and finding yourself sandwiched between two slick pickpockets. One might stand on your toe and elbow you painfully in the ribs while pretending it was an accident.

'Skuz'apo,' he might mutter and smile in apology before slipping away into the crowd.

Meanwhile, of course, the pain you had experienced had dulled you into being unaware of the swift dip of his partner's hand into your pocket which had relieved you of your wallet.

It was thus how the terrorists saw the Selous Scouts ... we were not unflattered. It was clear we were making headway in the unpopularity stakes of the enemy. More importantly, it was evident that while our pseudo role might be well concealed from many senior members of the Government, the Security Forces in general and the public at large, by the forest of rhubarb surrounding us, ZANLA and ZIPRA had not been taken in.

This marked the commencement of forever changing and often desperate counter-measures initiated by the enemy in unsuccessful attempts to stop us pick-pocketing our way into their very ranks or into their networks.

3-Troop Commence Operations: February, 1974

The men of 3-Troop completed their selection course on the 10th February ... five days ahead of schedule, and reported, ready for operational duty, to our Bindura farm camp on the 25th.

Again, as with 2-Troop, they were immediately deployed into a relatively quiet area, the Chimanda Tribal Trust Land, to find their feet and consolidate in practice what they had been taught in theory on the final phase of their selection course.

Their performance was excellent and they were withdrawn after twenty days and sent off for a few days rest and recreation.

Chiweshe Tribal Trust Land could be likened to a long finger thrust deep into the European farming areas of the Umvukwes, Centenary and Mount Darwin.

The prospect of a large number of terrorists basing up in Chiweshe was of serious concern to the Bindura Joint Operational Command, for the adjacent European owned farms are agriculturally rich ... and ... there was a distinct prospect of the farmers abandoning their farms if a pattern of terrorist attacks on their properties erupted. As it was, there had already been a number of isolated incidents, and the farmers were becoming decidedly jumpy.

Because of this we scheduled 3-Troop for deployment there.

Winston Hart, now a Detective Inspector, and I had discussions with the Special Branch at Centenary, while he was preparing the intelligence brief for the deployment. They estimated there were between sixty and eighty ZANLA terrorists in Chiweshe, but fortunately, as an aid to the prospects of a successful infiltration, Special Branch had heard there had recently been a large influx of new groups there ... and more were expected in the near future.

They were unable to give us much more, as their sources of information in Chiweshe had dried up . . . which we were fast learning was the classic sign of widespread subversion. In spite of the new groups coming in, we knew it was not going to be simple to gain easy acceptance by the locals, so we decided to start off in those parts of Chiweshe which, according to information, had not been infiltrated by ZANLA. Once there they would choose and set up their own contactmen and *policemen*, and use them to make contact with neighbouring established groups.

We compiled an elaborate cover story to the effect that they had bumped the Security Forces several times on the way in, which had left them totally disorganised and unable to arrive via the accepted channels of being passed down the line from one contactman to the next. The large number of recent arrivals should tend to confuse the locals who would hardly expect to know every ZANLA terrorist there.

On Monday 4th March, Mick Hardy with a group of twenty men moved into north Chiweshe and Sergeant Bruce Fitzsimmons and his group of twenty men took up position in some high hill features in the south.

We were satisfyingly relieved to learn, soon after infiltration, that both groups had gained acceptance by the locals who were apparently delighted to see them.

Meetings attended by hundreds of tribesmen were set up. Contactmen and *policemen* were selected and appointed and they all approached their new responsibilities with enthusiasm and dedication.

Life for the European element of the troops became wearing, due to a constant stream of visitors to the base camps. As a result they had to stay in concealment during the daylight hours and could only reappear after dark, when they would catch up on the day's happenings, prepare situation reports, and issue orders for the next day.

Surprisingly enough, we learned at the start of this exercise that the terrorists made no effort to keep the whereabouts of their bases secret from the tribesmen . . . visits and visitors were encouraged. It was clear the terrorists were so over-confident of the acceptance by the tribesmen of their subversion message, that they didn't bother overmuch with base security.

The apparent support for the ZANLA cause in Chiweshe though was, without doubt, overwhelming and while this made things easy for Selous Scouts' pseudo operations, it was very disturbing in a broader sense.

I brought this overall state of subversion to the attention of the local Special Branch Member in Charge and to the Department of Internal Affairs, but they immediately pooh-poohed my report as exaggeration. The Special Branch officer however, began to change his tune as, ticking them off on my fingers, I told him the identities of his more important sources in Chiweshe and which of them were playing a double game and working for both sides. His face dropped considerably when I identified one particular informer of his who was feeding false information back to Special Branch, and on being paid for it, was using the money to buy the terrorists food!

Grave misgivings were immediately expressed by both the Special Branch and the Internal Affairs at Centenary about our role, and they even accused us of doing ZANLA's job of subverting the locals for them. Personally, I too had experienced some disquieting thoughts about this possibility, but as I pointed out to my detractors, there was no other way . . . if we did not precisely adopt the same techniques as the terrorists, we could not hope to beat them.

This, of course, bearing in mind the lessons learned in Malaya, was the precise time the Rhodesian Government should have swung into action with a well orchestrated psychological campaign to combat the terrorist influence in those areas, but this, with their usual lack of foresight, was only to take place after the stable door had been open for years, and when the horse had well and truly bolted out of sight.

While the groups were doing extremely well in general, some unexpected problems arose which we had great difficulty in finding solutions to. The main problem resulted from locals producing a succession of so-called *sellouts* for us to deal with . . . *dealing* in terrorist parlance, meaning to murder them.

I helicoptered into Chiweshe to discuss the problems at first hand, as they were much too

delicate to discuss on the air, even with the use of codes. Helicopters we had found, were the most satisfactory method of rendezvousing for a debrief or to deliver fresh orders. There were many radio relay stations positioned on various high features in the *Hurricane* operational area, and the terrorists were well aware the Security Forces visited them and also made use of high ground to establish observation points, so the landing of helicopters on hills worried them not at all. So, when I needed to talk to a callsign they, or more likely the callsign commander accompanied by a few men, would slip from their base unnoticed by the locals, and meet me on top of a pre-designated hill where a helicopter would drop me and pick me up after I had finished my business.

Another method occasionally used, was to drive to a rendezvous at night and meet up with the callsign. This was unsatisfactory, because we and the Special Branch were about the only Security Force members who made a practice of moving at night . . . mainly during the course of dropping off callsigns prior to them moving across country into their areas of operations.

I met the command element of 3-Troop on a kopje in Chiweshe and we had a long and comprehensive discussion on the *sellout* issue . . . clearly we could not kill them to maintain cover . . . but what were the alternatives?

After examining all angles of the problem, I instructed they announce to the tribesmen that they had become unhappily aware that many people were using the *Chimurenga* war to further their own selfish interests, and lying about their enemies in the hope the ZANLA comrades would kill them. This was appalling for the ZANLA image, and for the cause ZANLA was fighting for.

'In fact,' they were to make it clear, 'if we became aware of like instances, we would execute the accuser as an enemy of the people.'

At the same time, I ordered that if a genuine Police or Special Branch informer was notified to them for liquidation, then his immediate removal from the tribal area would be arranged by Special Branch who would reward, then resettle him at the far end of Rhodesia. The tribesmen though, would be told the *sellout* had been sent to Mozambique for punishment by the ZANLA High Command.

It was educational to note, that after the threat to shoot false accusers, there was an immediate drop in the number of accusations.

Lieutenant Mick Hardy had a particular problem. His contactmen and *policemen* had refused outright to put them in physical contact with the real terrorist groups in the area, even though those terrorists had been told all about Mick's group. It seemed that while the contactmen believed Mick's men were genuine and not *Skuz'apo* . . . thanks to the obvious enthusiasm they had put into politicising and organising the locals . . . they were still nervous for they had received no notice of their impending arrival from ZANLA High Command in Mozambique.

It was clear that if we didn't do something quick to bolster Mick's bona fides, the terrorists and their networks would begin to detect a large and smelly rat.

One problem Mick had was that one of the contactmen had blandly suggested to his men that they kill a particular European farmer whose farm bordered on the western edge of the Chiweshe Tribal Trust Land. I had no immediate answer to that one, so I went away to think about it.

Later, I arranged another hill-top meeting with Mick and his African non-commissioned officers. To their surprise, I told them that in order to keep our credentials unstained, we were going to mount a mock attack on the farm of the European in question, but I would arrange things so he and his family would be away from home the night of the proposed attack.

Mick was ordered to arrange for a small team, accompanied by the contactman and one tribesman, to carry out a detailed night reconnaissance of the farm before the *attack* was mounted.

After the incident I wanted it reported on radio, television and in the newspapers that six terrorists had been killed while unsuccessfully attacking the farm in question.

Mick would return to his base area, and after summonsing a meeting of the locals, his men would publicly accuse the contactman . . . incidentally a sub-chief . . . of treachery, in that he had

sent the *freedom fighters* into a Security Force trap which had resulted in the killing of six of them and the extremely narrow escape of the rest.

The tribesmen present would then be asked to decree the contactman's fate . . . it was obvious in advance what that would be . . . death!

After prolonging the matter by a certain amount of play-acting, including the organisation of a firing party, Mick's group would relent. Then, after giving the contactman a severe public thrashing, he would be dismissed from his post, but allowed to remain with his people, although under surveillance and under a suspended death sentence.

'How does that sound?' I asked Mick and his men.

'Ishe,' replied a senior African member admiringly, 'that should consolidate our position one hundred percent, as until now, the real terrorists here have done nothing but sleep with the women and go to the beer drinks. The people, to say the least, are very sceptical as to whether ZANLA intend, or even have the ability to fight.'

I set off post-haste for Army Headquarters in Salisbury for a conference with General Walls. I sat down and explained the situation in Chiweshe and the real danger we were facing of our cover being blown through inactivity and, if it were, that it would be likely we'd lose all opportunity of getting to grips with ZANLA there.

General Walls didn't oppose the basic concept of what we had schemed out, but he was concerned about the part I envisaged the Rhodesian news media should play in the deception. Until then there had never been an occasion where anything other than a true casualty figure had been announced.

I urged that on this occasion the potential fruits of the operation warranted a slight bending of what rules there might be . . . in any event, there was no reason why six dead terrorists couldn't be omitted from the next official communique, which would square up both the score and the bureaucratic conscience.

After lengthy discussions he gave his approval and I got to work finalising the details.

Before leaving Salisbury to return to Bindura, I paid a call on the Salisbury Blood Transfusion Service where I had arranged for one of the nurses, the wife of a Selous Scout, to filch some human blood for use in the proposed drama.

Mick Hardy, meanwhile, had arranged for the contactman and tribesman to go with a small patrol of his Scouts to reconnoitre the farm. During the course of this patrol, they bumped into one of the farmer's long service and *loyal* labourers who clearly thought the slaughter of his employer and his family was the idea of the year and promptly volunteered to act as guide. With his help the reconnaissance of the farm went off very well. Afterwards, the date for the mock attack was set, and Winston Hart and I made arrangements to clear the area of troops, as best we could, without arousing their suspicions.

When the big day arrived I drove a civilian vehicle over to the farm during the morning. The farmer's wife, a good looking woman with two children, aged about two and six years, came out to greet me. I asked to speak to her husband, but learned to my relief, that he was on call-up and doing a stint with the Police Reserve.

I introduced myself as a Special Branch officer and swore her to secrecy, feeling terribly mean at the immediate look of concern which came into her eyes.

I then told her I was in possession of information which indicated that the terrorists were planning to hold a meeting on her farm that night and that we proposed to ambush them. For this reason I felt it advisable she move to a neighbour's farm for the night, in case her house became a terrorist target. I made the point that under no circumstances should she let her cook or any of her servants know she was going away, but she should allow dinner for the family to be prepared and left in the oven, as if she were returning home late. Needless to say, the lady raised no objection and only too happily agreed.

After dark I surreptitiously returned to the farm with a party of Scouts, armed with standard Security Force weapons, and we sneaked into the house and made ourselves comfortable. The servants had left for their homes in the farm compound.

We kept the house in total darkness, except for the floodlights mounted on the security fence surrounding the homestead.

About an hour later Mick Hardy and six of his pseudo terrorists appeared and we let them into the house. They sat down and enjoyed a good meal, for a change, of roast beef and vegetables, which had been left, in accordance with my earlier instructions in the oven to keep warm, by the cook.

After they were well and truly replete, they left with instructions to leave a clear trail leading from the security fence in the direction of Chiweshe for about eight kilometres . . . as if they had left the scene in disorder . . . and should anti-track thereafter to throw the follow-up troops off the spoor.

I had set the time of the mock attack at 02h00, and at this time precisely, my party of Scouts took up their properly selected ambush positions around the house and together ripped off a thunderous and highly unsatisfactory fusillade of automatic and machinegun fire into the sky.

At the same time, I personally activated the farmer's Agra-Alert alarm, but nothing happened . . . no piercing wail joined the cacophony of shots . . . the battery was flat. I then radioed a report to Centenary to get the Fireforce of the Rhodesian African Rifles out.

Whilst awaiting their arrival we had much to keep us occupied.

I sprinkled fresh human blood, of different blood groups, on the fence and in its immediate vicinity at the most suitable attack approach, while the others distributed an assortment of terrorist weapons, some scarred by bullets and human blood-stained, in the chosen contact area.

Two of our Land-Rovers, which had meanwhile been awaiting my signal at a nearby rendezvous, came to the farmhouse and parked in front. Then six of our African soldiers, three to each vehicle, laid down in the back and we covered them up with blankets, leaving their legs and feet . . . some bare, some wearing authentic terrorist footwear, visible from the backs of the trucks. After splashing them liberally with our Blood Transfusion Centre blood, I strongly warned all *corpses* present that if they dared to breathe while being inspected by the Fireforce, they would likely get a burst of fire from a trigger-happy soldier.

Shortly afterwards six Air Force helicopters came in, landed safely and disgorged their cargoes of Fireforce troops, much to my heartfelt relief. There was a reasonable moon that night, but it is still not easy for a pilot to land a helicopter after dark . . . particularly when, as it was there, the homestead was surrounded by bluegum trees of giant stature. It would have been a terrible cross for me to bear had one crashed, causing loss of life, for it was, after all, only a hoax call . . . even though a deadly serious one.

I took the Fireforce commander, a young lieutenant, around the perimeter of the house and gave him a blow by blow rundown on our battle.

While I was doing this, the *bodies* of the six *terrorist kills* had attracted a crowd of intensely curious Rhodesian African Rifles' Fireforce soldiers, and my men had great difficulty in stopping them from removing the blankets so they could have a closer look. Some were even for dragging the bodies out into the dust and shooting them again for a sort of vicarious satisfaction.

When I realised what was going on I moved speedily, for I realised it was only a matter of moments before my men expired through holding their breath, or they gave the game away by an involuntary movement. I told everyone to stand back and ordered my drivers to take the bodies back to our camp where they would be photographed and fingerprinted by Special Branch. I then added coldly to the Fireforce men, that they'd surely be better employed in searching the contact area for items of terrorist equipment . . . so that, at dawn, a follow-up of the enemy survivors could be mounted.

As soon as the embryo day allowed sufficient light, trackers of the Rhodesian African Rifles cast a circle around the farmhouse and soon picked up the tracks of Mick and his men.

Prior to the lieutenant moving out, I told him we were sure he would find the spoor leading towards Chiweshe, as we had heard of a big build-up there. However, I warned him he was not

allowed, under any circumstances, to cross the boundary into the Chiweshe Tribal Trust Lands unless he first obtained my personal clearance, as other troops in that area would first have to be warned. The lieutenant, who had been highly impressed with our standard of night shooting, shook his men out into a follow-up formation behind the trackers, and off they went in a most determined fashion, obviously set upon emulating our success.

I was very worried some hours later, when I heard him report his position back to Centenary and request permission to enter the Chiweshe Tribal Trust Land. Either Mick Hardy's anti-tracking had been a total disaster, or the Rhodesian African Rifles' trackers, inspired by a young officer who would not take no for an answer, had tenaciously stuck to the spoor through thick and thin, in spite of the anti-tracking.

Anyway, for whatever the reason, I was faced with a tricky situation.

I broke into the radio conversation at the first opportunity and said that anticipating the terrorists' line of flight, I had sent a tracking team along the Chiweshe Tribal Trust Land border at first light.

'By a pure stroke of luck,' I said, 'my trackers have found the terrorists' spoor and are now in hot pursuit.'

This led to a very heated exchange with the Rhodesian African Rifles who demanded they be given permission to continue the follow-up of *their* terrorists, but I stuck to my guns . . . I had no option . . . and ordered them to discontinue. Privately I sympathised with the almost open disgust of the indignant young lieutenant, who quite understandably, felt he was being cheated out of his just rewards.

Meanwhile, back in Chiweshe, the next stage of the operation was slipped into gear, and the contactman, to his complete bewilderment and dismay, found himself arrested and hauled before a large gathering of local tribesmen.

The pseudo-terrorist Scouts, dirty, blood-stained and exceedingly angry, gave the crowd a graphic account of the treachery which clearly had transpired, then asked them to decide upon a fitting punishment for the contactman who was obviously the guilty party.

The answer was as predicted . . . death!

The contactman was shoved into a kneeling position, whereupon the pseudo Commander made a great display of loading and cocking his Tokarev pistol in readiness for the execution. Then, just as he was about to carry out sentence, he hesitated and instituted a further discussion . . . maybe the decision to execute the *sellout* was too hasty . . . he still denied guilt, and he might be innocent . . . it might well have been the farm labourer who volunteered to guide the reconnaissance party . . . perhaps he was the informer.

After further lengthy deliberations the *terrorists* and the villagers jointly and democratically decided a severe thrashing should be the contactman's immediate punishment. Thereafter, he would remain under a suspended death sentence, which would be brought into effect if he were again found to be associated with treachery against ZANLA.

The contactman was then given a very severe public beating, which served him right, as it had been his suggestion in the first place that the farmer should be murdered.

The farmer, when told an attack on his house had been beaten off, was released from Police Reserve duty so that he could sort things out at home. I was waiting in his garden when his car came.

'I believe there's been a spot of bother,' the farmer said.

'Correct.'

'Which direction did they come from?'

'From over there.' I pointed to a land of waist-high grass adjoining his homestead security fence.

'Ah, I thought so,' said the farmer speculatively, as if the attack were hypothetical. 'I always used to say that if we were attacked, the terrorists would use that approach.'

'In that case,' I snapped with genuine anger, 'why the bloody hell didn't you cut the grass . . . we might have killed all twelve if you had. There is also the question of your Agra-Alert . . . it

didn't function last night because it had a flat battery. Can you imagine the consequences to your wife if we had not heard the terrorists were coming?'

I looked him fiercely in the eye, while he shuffled his feet and fidgeted in embarrassed discomfort.

The news of the farm attack spread from tribesman to tribesman in the Chiweshe Tribal Trust Lands, and it was amusing to hear that each and every terrorist gang in the Chiweshe promptly staked a claim to the credit for the attack. The tribesmen, however, were not fooled, for they were well aware Mick Hardy's men had been responsible, and their image and stature soared immensely.

More importantly, our chastised and chastened contactman, eager to redeem himself and stave off any remaining chance of a sudden and painful death, was bounding from village to village in Chiweshe in an effort to make contact with ZANLA groups, all the time singing the praises of Mick's men.

Blackening up Difficulties

The experience of the experimental teams ... and this would in no way be diminished by the experience of the Selous Scouts, in fact, it would be reinforced ... had taught us that a European has little chance of carrying off a successful masquerade as an African ... at least, not for long.

It is not only the more obvious differences ... skin pigmentation ... hair texture ... colour of eyes. There are also the more subtle differences ... shape of face ... shape of head ... mannerisms ... method of movement ... shape of hips ... shoulder shape and so on.

The essential thing in all pseudo operations, in the African context, was that everything had to be fronted by Africans, whether it was internal operations or external raids.

An amazing variety of blackening substances were used for our activities, from burnt cork to theatrical make-up, to concoctions specially brewed for us by the Police Forensic Scientist ... but none of it was ever truly satisfactory ... bearing in mind that when a European Selous Scout operator blackened up, he needed to stay black for weeks at a time ... without streaks of white skin becoming visible once he started sweating ... which meant the Africans in a group had to keep a constant critical eye on their European comrades.

The most useful of all aids became wide-brimmed, floppy hats to hang low and cover the European faces ... and beards ... the bigger and bushier the better, but also dyed black ... which also served to break up racially characteristic features ... at least when seen from a distance. It also acted as a good base for the various *black is beautiful* make-up concoctions we used.

Aside from that, it was not practical to shave in the bush ... soap smells, and can be smelt from quite an astonishing distance by persons like terrorists, who have not only their ears, but all of their senses constantly to the ground.

From commencement I encouraged everyone in the Regiment to grow beards ... administrative staff, Territorial Army soldiers, everyone ... to give a cover to those of the European regular soldiers who were the operators ... and who had to wear beards anyway.

It soon caught on as a fashion and it was not long before most European young men in Rhodesia were sporting them.

From those officers in the Security Forces who were uninitiated in what our main purpose in life was, came a different reaction. Comments that we were ill-disciplined ... that men with beards were scruffy ... that it was ridiculous that soldiers should be allowed to get away with murder ... and grow beards.

The European operators were keen, terribly keen ... they tried everything possible that could make them black and keep them black to heighten the effectiveness of their cover, and make their job in the bush easier.

One Selous Scout ... who like the unknown warrior, shall stay unnamed although illustrious in history ... gamely submerged himself in a bath of water spiced liberally with gentian of violet ... only to leap out suddenly to commence a sort of war dance ... his fingers attempting to

massage away the burning agony he was experiencing in the centre facet of the most valued of his family jewels!

There were other problems relating to the Selous Scouts blackening up too . . . the obverse of the coin as it were . . . the unblackening process when men came out of the bush and into the welcoming arms of their wives or girl friends. Before they could, they had to subject themselves to long and often agonising scrubbing sessions . . . but, no matter how hard they tried, it was difficult indeed to be completely successful and traces always remained in their hair-lines, ears and elsewhere.

First External Operation: Chiawa, Zambia: February, 1974

The Selous Scouts were created primarily to combat problems relating to the internal scene, but external operations had been mentioned briefly during the inaugural meeting which discussed our formation, convened at the Special Branch Headquarters in November, 1973.

External operations were the strict responsibility of the Central Intelligence Organisation and during that meeting, mention was made that if Africans were required for an external operation, we would be expected to make African soldiers, on a highly selective basis, available if need be, to work with the Central Intelligence Organisation or the Special Air Service.

The Special Air Service had been involved in trans-border operations for a number of years, so understandably perhaps, they jealously regarded this as their own special preserve. Surprisingly enough, I learned that apart from African members of the Special Branch, Africans had never been used during operations external to Rhodesia. I gathered quite clearly from the tone of that early meeting, that Africans were considered suspect, which explained the policy, perhaps, of keeping the Special Air Service all-white.

In February, 1974, I was approached by the Central Intelligence Organisation and asked to loan them some African troops to conduct a reconnaissance of a Zambian village called Chiawa, suspected to be the site of a ZIPRA terrorist camp.

Having become aware by recent experience how important it was for Africans to work with Europeans whom they knew and respected, and whom they were compatable with, I declined to detach any of my men but suggested instead that we handle the task.

The Central Intelligence Organisation were a little put out by my attitude, but as I was insistent, they finally agreed, and so I gained, for the first time, experience of just what inter-service and inter-unit jealousy was all about, and how it could adversely affect military operations.

I personally went to the Central Intelligence Organisation for a briefing. The task seemed straight-forward but as this would be our first external operation, I was anxious, over anxious perhaps, that it be successful.

'The mission is simple,' the Central Intelligence Organisation briefing officer said. 'Get an accurate fix on the ZIPRA camp we think is there, and find out what the terrorist strength is.'

After asking some questions, it soon became apparent that the intelligence available on the camp to enable us to plan the operation was virtually nil . . . no one even had the vaguest idea of which direction the camp lay from Chiawa.

I looked at the Central Intelligence Organisation officer and asked incredulously: 'Is that all you have?'

'Yes.'

'What about the Zambians, have they any troops in the area?'

'Yes,' he said, 'they have a company base here,' pointing at a spot on the map south of Chiawa, almost against the Zambezi River. 'There is a double storey house there from which they watch for movement on the river.'

'Do they patrol at night? Do they mount ambushes? Do they . . .'

'We don't know,' said the Central Intelligence Organisation man, negatively shaking his head in answer to all my questions.

'Locals,' I asked, 'do they carry identification documents? If they do we are going to need them too.'

'No,' he replied smiling, obviously happy he had one positive answer, 'there's no requirement for that.' He changed the subject. 'I've laid on a Special Air Service boat-party to take your men across . . . how many will there be?'

'Two,' I replied tersely, 'both of them black.'

'Really,' he exclaimed, clearly shaken, 'are you sure they'll be able to handle it on their own?'

I looked at him levelly. 'They've performed a damn sight more dangerous tasks internally . . . why should a stretch of water and an international boundary make any difference? Where will the Special Air Service land them?'

He tapped the map pointing to a spot on the river.

'Jesus!' I exclaimed . . . it was my turn to be shaken. 'It's right opposite that Zambian Army post.'

'No problem,' he said, 'plenty of rocks to walk on so you don't leave any tracks . . . we've used it before, you know?'

'I didn't,' I said tersely, 'what for?'

'I'm afraid I can't tell you that, Major . . . need to know and all that.'

I lapsed into a thoughtful silence. There was something I didn't like about the whole scene.

The next day I made a point of contacting the Special Air Service officer who would be commanding the boat party . . . I knew him well . . . he was a good officer.

'Tell me something about the landing point,' I asked. 'I'm told it's been used before.'

'Um . . . yes,' he concurred after a slight hesitation.

'On how many occasions?' I asked.

'I don't know if I'm allowed to tell you,' he replied cautiously.

'Junior,' I rapped coldly, 'let's not be bloody childish. I intend to find out . . . if you don't tell me I'll drive to your barracks and on to Army Headquarters if necessary . . . that will surely mean a lot of time wasted.'

'Okay,' he said surrendering with a grin, 'at least four occasions to my knowledge . . . it could be considerably more.'

'What were you doing over there?' I had to have an answer because it was clear the state of Zambian Army alertness would be vitally significant to the success of the operation.

'We mined some of the roads.'

'When?'

'Last week.'

'Did you get any joy?'

'Yes, the Zambian Company Commander's jeep . . . he and a few others saw their backsides.'

'My God!' I said. 'The Central Intelligence Organisation told me that everything was quiet and peaceful over the river.'

I told the Lieutenant with some curtness, that the proposed date for the operation and the landing spot were unsatisfactory to me. I then said I had postponed the whole thing and would advise him of my new plan plus timings in due course.

I reported to the G-I at Army Headquarters, the next morning.

'How is the Zambian reconnaissance operation going?' he asked with interest.

'It's not . . . I've postponed it,' I said shortly.

'My God, Ron, I've told the General they went in last night and he has advised the Prime Minister . . . you can't just change things like that!'

'I have changed things and I will continue to change things if I continue to be fed crap intelligence which puts the lives of my men in jeopardy.' I handed a paper to him. 'Here are the new timings.'

I had selected two African soldiers for the task. One, Corporal Chibanda, an early volunteer from the Rabie era was an extremely intelligent man, who had, even at that early stage of the Selous Scouts, already accumulated an outstanding record. The other was a veteran guerilla from

an early infiltration into Rhodesia by the name of Able, who had spent many years as a prisoner in Khami Prison before joining us. While a terrorist, he had travelled extensively, undergoing training courses in Russia, and in Cuba.

The Special Branch detachment attached to us, commanded by Superintendent Mac McGuinness, swung into action collating as much intelligence as possible for the projected task. However, in spite of their conscientious ferreting in the hallowed halls of the Central Intelligence Organisation, the information to hand still remained very sketchy.

My new plan was simple. The men would cross the Zambezi River at 19h00 when the moon would provide just enough light for the Special Air Service crews of the two Klepper canoes being used, to see where they were going and avoid obstacles, but insufficient light to make them easily visible to any observation points on the Zambian banks.

As the delay in commencing the operation had succeeded in causing a heavy head of steam to build up at Army Headquarters, and as the moon was rapidly reaching a phase where any further delays would spell postponement until the next suitable moon phase, I decided reluctantly, to dispense with a reconnaissance of a suitable beaching point.

The Special Air Service lieutenant in command of the boat party and I discussed it, and decided to beach in the reeds two kilometres downstream from the Zambian Company Headquarters, where our two-man team would endeavour to land on one of the game paths which abounded by the waters' edge. Their skill in anti-tracking, combined with the constant movement of wild animals, should obscure their signs. Once ashore, their instructions were to keep a low profile and try to locate the suspected terrorist camp by means of a physical reconnaissance, moving only by night and hiding up by day. They were told to keep away from the locals unless they were certain it was completely safe. If they did approach anyone, they were to pose as businessmen from the north investigating the possibility of buying bananas which grow profusely in that locality.

Two crash rendezvous were selected and emergency drills discussed and rehearsed in fine detail.

The crossing went without a hitch on a Friday night. We chose the weekend, because we knew that in keeping with normal custom, there would be a great number of weekend beer-drinks and dances which should be well attended by Zambian Army personnel . . . which should lower their standard of alertness, to say the least.

At twilight on Saturday evening, Corporal Chibanda and Able emerged from their hiding place and moved cautiously in a wide half-circle towards high ground, from where they hoped to carry out observations on the suspect area.

Unfortunately, a band of honey seekers walked right into them. To avoid arousing their suspicions, Able, who had learned the local dialect during his early halcyon days as a ZIPRA terrorist based in the area, told the people of their banana quest cover story, adding wryly that they had been misdirected and were lost.

Their new friends were friendly and unsuspecting, and insisted on guiding them to the Chief's village, telling them he knew all about the banana trade.

There was nothing the Scouts could do without arousing the honey hunters' suspicions. Anyway, Corporal Chibanda reasoned inwardly, if the same attitude of hospitality and friendliness prevailed at the Chief's village, they would probably gather in all the information they needed with little effort.

At the Chief's village a beer drink was in full swing. The Chief himself greeted them, inviting them to sit down and join the beer party.

After Chibanda and Able had happily quaffed a large calabash of African beer between them, the Chief unexpectedly asked for their permit to be in the area.

'Chief,' said Able, taking a chance, 'we did not tell those honey hunters the truth. We haven't come to buy bananas . . . we are Zimbabwean Freedom Fighters from the camp. We sneaked away without permission to look for women.'

The Chief expressed happiness at discovering their true identities and promptly plied them with more beer.

Unfortunately for Chibanda and Able, he still insisted on seeing a pass from their camp commander, explaining apologetically that this was a Zambian Army instruction, following the sustaining of Zambian Army casualties when their vehicles had run over some landmines, apparently laid by the Rhodesian Security Forces.

The Chief told them the Zambian Army made constant checks in efforts to locate any spys or Rhodesian agents who might have crossed the river. Many of his people had been badly beaten up by the soldiers, he said, some had even been bayonetted in the buttocks. Personally, he was happy to accept their bona fides, but he dared not take a chance.

He then told one of his men to bicycle to the Zambian Army post and request a patrol call at his village to check-out his visitors.

The Scouts watched apprehensively, as the cyclist, who had also been drinking, unsteadily mounted his bicycle and departed . . . they would hardly be able to talk their way out of this, once the soldiers arrived . . . it was time to commence emergency escape drills.

One of their drills was, that if things started to get tricky, Chibanda would make his excuses and go off to relieve himself in the bush. Shortly afterwards, Able would follow him, and they would both slip away to safety.

The signal for this drill to commence was for Chibanda to smooth his hair in a particular manner, which he promptly did.

Unfortunately, Able was engrossed in conversation and he missed the signal, although Chibanda didn't realise it. He stood up and excused himself, but as he left the circle by the fire, a villager stood up to accompany him.

'Chief's instructions,' mumbled the villager.

Assuming that Able was following, Chibanda walked into the bush on the village fringe, followed by an animatedly talking guard. His words died on his lips though, when Chibanda pulled a Tokarev pistol from his waistband and told him to clear off before he killed him.

The villager, only too anxious to save himself, took off like a startled rabbit into the night.

Chibanda, after shouting to Able to follow him, did the same.

He waited in vain for Able at the crash rendezvous and then moved on to the second rendezvous, but Able didn't come.

At dawn, Chibanda radioed for *a hot extraction* and was lifted out of Zambia by helicopter.

We learnt later that Able had been overpowered by the villagers and handed over to the Zambian Army. So, apart from confirming the presence of a terrorist camp in the vicinity of Chiawa, the operation had been an unmitigated disaster.

When I heard that rumours were circulating amongst the Central Intelligence Organisation personnel that the disaster was entirely the Selous Scouts' fault, I went to seek interview with Ken Flower, the Central Intelligence Organisation's Director. I told him I had been appalled at the abysmal lack of information provided to us to carry out our tasks. I pointed out that vitally important information, such as the previous Special Air Service activities nearby the first beaching point, had apparently been deliberately withheld, and that I had only heard of them by accident. Finally, I said, I found it hard to believe his organisation was unaware if the locals in Zambia . . . a hostile country bordering ours . . . carried identity cards or not.

I ended up by saying that while I was happy for the Selous Scouts to continue with external tasks I would not, in future, allow my Regiment to be in any way involved with operations planned by the man running his external operations.

All future requests from him would be planned entirely by us, and Mac McGuinness and his Special Branch officers would be responsible for preparing the intelligence picture. So, this operation became the first and last occasion on which we worked directly from a Central Intelligence Organisation briefing, or directly with that organisation.

Francistown: Abduction ZIPRA Official: March, 1974

In early March, Superintendent Mac McGuinness received confirmation that ZIPRA had established a headquarters set-up in Francistown, Botswana.

Its main purpose was to act as a recruiting agency and centre where ZIPRA recruits from Rhodesia could be brought after being smuggled across the border into Botswana illegally. From there they would tranship them to training camps they had established in Zambia. It would also control the infiltration into Rhodesia of intelligence agents, those bent on sabotage and political commissars tasked to prepare the ground in south western Rhodesia for the later infiltration of terrorist groups.

At the same time terrorist arms and supplies would be routed through the Headquarters and into Rhodesia for caches to be established in strategic areas.

It was the collective opinions of the Central Intelligence Organisation that the exercise had already commenced. There was no doubt too that the Botswana Government was well aware of the scope of the ZIPRA activities within their country, but they kept a blind eye blandly turned towards it.

Their official view, which they put out to the world, was that the ZIPRA Headquarters was a refugee centre allowed there only for high-minded humanitarian purposes.

There was much concern in Rhodesia at the new development as it could easily become the prelude to a ZIPRA second front in south western Rhodesia. The combination of a new and grave threat to our vital lines of communication with South Africa, and the greater level of troops which would have to be found from somewhere to counter it, was not something those responsible for the prosecution and direction of the war could easily ignore.

We, at least, had a first class and full intelligence briefing, for Mac McGuinness and his men had dug deep into the Special Branch vaults and the vaults of the Central Intelligence Organisation, while the Bulawayo Special Branch, who were most vitally affected by the Botswana threat, lent their unstinting assistance.

The plan which was finally evolved called for the capture of four high-ranking officers of the ZIPRA High Command who were running the show in Botswana.

The exact location of the Francistown house used both for accommodation and as a headquarters was known by the Central Intelligence Organisation, but unfortunately, no details were to hand regarding the house itself, which was vital if we were to mount a raid.

I gave first priority to a detailed reconnaissance of the house and its environs. Accordingly, Corporal Chibanda, having been hurriedly issued with a suitable passport, entered Botswana by train, legally and above board, on the 5th March.

He spent a fruitful eight days in Francistown where he not only cultivated close acquaintanceship with certain ZIPRA personnel, but he also managed to get himself invited into the house where he memorised the complete layout, including who occupied each bedroom, down to such finicky detail as the size and relative strengths of the doors and windows, the way they opened, and the types of locks fitted. It was another astonishing illustration of the faculty Africans have for memorising detail. Needless to say, when the mission was mounted, everything was found to be precisely as he had detailed.

A team of four European and four African soldiers was selected and put together. Superintendent Mac McGuinness, meanwhile, had found an empty house in Salisbury closely resembling the target, and rehearsals began in earnest.

The African soldiers, including Chibanda, were to take a train to Botswana from Bulawayo and book separately into various African hotels in Francistown.

Then, working in two-man teams, they would take shifts and mount a constant surveillance on the ZIPRA installation. The European soldiers would enter the country as tourists in two Land-Rovers and a saloon car, each of which had two sets of false number-plates, and register at various hotels in town. Afterwards, they would link up with their African counterparts.

As soon as the ZIPRA officials singled out for abduction were confirmed as being present at the headquarters, *H* hour would be set for midnight on the first possible night.

If the targets were out of town, the team would remain in Francistown for as long as they possibly could without arousing suspicion. But, if their presence excited interest or comment, they would abort the mission and immediately return to Rhodesia.

The *modus operandi* for the kidnap was kept as uncomplicated as possible. Two vehicles would be pre-parked at different points in town to enable getaway cars to be rapidly switched in the event of there being a Police chase.

On the dot of midnight they would burst open the front door and the team members, each armed with silenced pistols and coshes, would tackle their nominated targets.

Scenes of a similar nature are frequently seen at the movies and on television . . . and invariably the hero skilfully breaks the front door to matchwood after a hefty wham with a muscular shoulder . . . our rehearsals though, showed us it is not so easy in real life. After several very fit Selous Scouts had given up after achieving only bruised shoulders, and the door had remained as rigidly inviolate as ever, we realised that sterner action was called for.

It was clear the door must open immediately to prevent the inmates gaining time to react. After a diligent search for ideas, someone came up with a Police method of reality, which though highly successful, would surely never have been accepted in Hollywood. One man placed a short length of hardwood over the lock, while another struck it smartly with a fourteen pound hammer, causing the lock to spring and the door to fly open on impact. Once this simple technique was mastered, to the detriment of numerous doors, the team went into rehearsals until they were able to gain entrance into the practice house and be in their positions inside, within three seconds of the lock springing.

On the 25th March, the team moved to Bulawayo, where they carried out final rehearsals. Then, on the 29th March, they split up and made their separate ways to Francistown in accordance with the plan.

After linking up in Francistown the next morning, Chibanda, who had already carried out a reconnaissance, reported the targets as at home.

Surveillance was continued for the remainder of the day . . . the watchers logging that during the late afternoon the targets had left the house in a Land-Rover, but returned shortly after dark . . . four men were counted going back in the house.

At 23h00 the house lights went out.

At 23h45 the getaway car was in position.

Then, on the witching stroke of 24h00 the snatch team strolled boldly up to the house, the lead man eagerly fingering his massive hammer.

The long, sometimes boring hours spent on rehearsals, proved to be time well spent . . . the front door sprung easily open as the hammer struck home. Seconds later, each of the bleary-eyed and sleepy ZIPRA officials chosen for abduction awakened in fear and confusion to see torches shining in their eyes and pistols levelled at their heads.

As handcuffs were snapped onto their wrists, things suddenly went wrong . . . the befuddled minds of the terrorists cleared as the horror of what was occurring, collectively dawned upon them. Following the lead of one of them, they began to struggle and resist wildly, all the while screaming and shouting for help at the tops of their voices.

Coshes and pistol butts were freely swung in a determined effort to subdue the captures, but the damage had been done.

One of the Scouts keeping watch, suddenly beckoned Sergeant Peter Clemenshaw, the team leader, to join him at the window.

In the dimly lit road outside was a gathering crowd of neighbours, many armed with sticks, knobkerries and axes. There was an angry cacophony of voices, loudly demanding to know what the hell was going on.

Fortunately, Pete was fluent in Tswana, the local dialect, and he boldly strode outside, held up his hand authoritatively and addressed them in their own language.

'Go back to your homes . . . this is a Police raid,' he ordered. 'These people have broken the law and we have arrested them. If you hinder us during the performance of our duty, we will be forced to arrest you as well.'

The crowd, although still somewhat belligerent having been wakened from their sleep, finally, although reluctantly, dispersed.

While this was happening, the get-away Land-Rover was called forward and the, by now, subdued but very effectively gagged prisoners, were bundled inside. The raiding party, after picking up their other vehicles, unhurriedly drove out of town, giving the impression to all who might have seen them that they really were the Botswana Police.

Once clear of town they gathered speed until they reached the turn-off into a previously reconnoitred bush road which led to the Rhodesian border.

There was a delighted smile on Superintendent Mac McGuinness' face when he welcomed the team on its arrival back in Rhodesia, but that disappeared as soon as the abductees had climbed meekly from the Land-Rover and were put into line for him to inspect . . . we had snatched the wrong men!

A hurried, almost desperate, interrogation session came up with the answer. The men who had left the house during the afternoon were the right men . . . those seen returning after dark were not. The targets had driven to Francistown airport to meet four ZIPRA officials coming from Zambia to relieve them. After carrying out a quick handover/takeover at the airport, including passing over the keys of the house and the transport, the men Mac had wanted, had then, fortunately for them, climbed aboard the departing Air Botswana flight and taken off for Zambia.

The new incumbents of ZIPRA's Francistown office, had then cheerfully driven to Francistown, eager to commence duties, only to have their ambitions rudely thwarted by the Selous Scouts on their very first night there.

It seemed a hard blow initially, but in the end, the results proved highly profitable, for those in the bag were just as *au fait* with the current ZIPRA scene in Rhodesia and Botswana as the men they had replaced.

Later, after an intensive interrogation which had drained the prisoners dry of information, the Bulawayo Special Branch swung expertly into action.

The complete ZAPU and ZIPRA network which had dug its tentacles deep into the Matabeleland country areas and the city and location areas of Bulawayo was totally checkmated, while countless arrests were made, as well as arms caches being indicated and subsequently seized.

The final appreciation of the results accrued by this operation was that we had set-back ZIPRA infiltration timings by at least nine months.

Internal Operations: Chiweshe and Bobogrande: April, 1974

During the night of the 12th April, Sergeant Bruce Fitzsimmons' voice scratched through low on the radio from his base at Chiweshe to report he was onto a group of between forty and fifty ZANLA terrorists. His problem was in pinpointing their presence at any one time, as they used three different bush camps outside villages to base up in, on all of which he had accurate fixes. However, they randomly moved from one to another to guard against surprise attack by the Security Forces.

The area was too densely populated for constant close-in observation to be maintained, while Fireforce was being guided to target.

Equipped with this urgent information I drove, with all due haste, to the Bindura Joint Operational Command.

I sought out the Duty Officer and asked for the Brigadier. He left and returned shortly afterwards with him plus the Air Force member of the Joint Operational Command . . . an extremely efficient officer.

I suggested that as it was impossible to gain a clearer picture of where the terrorists were based at any particular moment, we bomb all three camps simultaneously at dawn, and helicopter the Fireforce into any camp in which movement was seen during the strike.

After listening to what I had to say, the Brigadier gave the go ahead for a strike, leaving the Air Force officer and I to formulate a plan of attack.

The next morning at 11h30 the airstrike went in . . . nearly every aircraft in the Rhodesian Air Force having been raked up for the event.

Then, just prior to the aircraft reaching their target areas, Bruce Fitzsimmons came up on the air unexpectedly.

'Cancel Alpha and Bravo targets . . . concentrate on Charlie . . . forty terrs in Charlie as at now.'

'Christ,' I shouted and scrambled for the Air Force telephone.

Well, it was the disaster of the year, and I cannot blame the Air Force. They had been just about to go in, and somewhere along the line, in the urgency of it all, the lines got twisted. The virgin bush at Alpha and Bravo targets got the biggest pasting of the war until then, while the terrorists at Charlie packed up their gear and vanished into the bush.

Bruce Fitzsimmons was shouting . . . I was yodelling, but it was too late and to no avail.

The result was a big fat zero, and we felt very, very foolish afterwards.

On the 15th April, Bruce came back on the air to confirm the presence of fifty ZANLA terrorists in Charlie camp when the bombers had gone in, according to the story of the local contactman. He said the terrorists had, after the raid, hiked north to Bobogrande, which was well to the west of Mick Hardy's base, but still in his area of operation.

Mick got the news the same time as I did, due to our common radio frequency, and immediately started to move out in the direction of Bobogrande, but before vacating his camp, his much chastised contactman appeared, his face wreathed in smiles. The news he so proudly brought was that he had made contact with four terrorists from a group who wished to meet up with Mick Hardy's group.

Whilst Mick and his men were on their way to effect this meeting, his men met up with a friendly old gentleman, who more than happily told them the location where they could find yet another group, this time of fifteen guerillas.

The place . . . Bobogrande!

During the night of the 17th April, Mick radioed in a report . . . he had located two camps in the Bobogrande area containing a total strength of thirty to forty terrorists.

I briefed the Officer Commanding the Rhodesian African Rifles at Centenary, and requested a first light attack on the camps, but it was not until two hours after first light, and after much impatient fuming on my part, that the Rhodesian African Rifles finally put in an appearance. Apparently their Commander, after taking in the abortive air strikes with some cynicism, had not cared to believe the Selous Scouts had a real target for them.

The Fireforce commander, an officer with a rather affected tone of speech, was dropped by helicopter onto a towering pinnacle of rock from which he had decided to control the battle. After a very short time, it became rapidly apparent to Mick Hardy that if he didn't do something quickly, the quarry he had worked so hard to get, was going to disappear into the long grass, as it was easily apparent the Fireforce commander would be totally unable to control the battle from his lofty perch, where he had no view at all of the events happening at ground level.

Mick and the senior helicopter pilot took over temporary joint command, and as a result of this, contact with the enemy was joined, and a running battle commenced.

When darkness fell the score stood at eight terrorists killed and four captured. The next day two more bodies were found, bringing the kills to a total of ten.

Interrogation of the four captives revealed that at the time the helicopters appeared overhead, twenty-six terrorists were sitting below awaiting the arrival of a much larger group with whom they were to have joint discussions regarding the threat the Selous Scouts were posing to the ZANLA war effort.

While the running battle was still raging, I flew from Bindura to Centenary, to lay claim, on behalf of the Selous Scouts, to any prisoners before the Centenary Special Branch and Criminal Investigation Department did.

I touched down as the first helicopter-load of dead terrorists was being brought in from the contact area and I straight away became involved in a row with the Rhodesian African Rifles and the Centenary Special Branch, who each wanted the terrorist weapons and kit. Both were very disgruntled when I took them over.

The Fireforce returned to Centenary around 18h00 and I made a point of congratulating them ... they had done well. I don't think I'm wrong when I say it was the biggest single kill the Rhodesian African Rifles achieved throughout the whole war. There was not, I might add, a reciprocal congratulation from the Commanding Officer, the Rhodesian African Rifles, although the Adjutant did, afterwards, make a point of personally thanking me for the part the Selous Scouts had played.

Turning of Terrorists

The next day was spent hassling over the prisoners ... who should have them ... the Special Branch attached to the Selous Scouts, or the Special Branch attached to the Joint Operational Command? The acquisition of prisoners was vital to us, indeed, as they were to the Special Branch attached to the Joint Operational Command particularly when, as was the case at Centenary, the whole Special Branch informer system was in tatters due to ZANLA's successful efforts to negate it.

Until then, a prisoner to the Special Branch mainly meant the acquisition of historical information. Where was he recruited? Who recruited him? What route did he take to leave the country? What route did he take to come back in? Where was he trained? What type of training did he receive? What were the names of his instructors? Who was the camp commander? Who was his group commander in Rhodesia? What were the names of the members of his group?

All of this was first class background material, but it was of little use to us for it did not lead us to an immediate kill or a capture ... all of it could be got at leisure after the kills and captures of his friends and comrades had been achieved.

The Special Branch, outside of the Selous Scouts, were still working at that time on the Policemanlike basis that when you had nothing to start with, you investigated everything comprehensively from A to Z, carefully gathering in every conceivable piece of information which might, and I stress might, eventually lead to the kill or capture of a terrorist.

ZANLA had been aware of this and had taken steps and adopted systems which minimised the risks of them falling foul of these more conservative methods.

Which was why the Selous Scouts had been formed.

Nevertheless, it was difficult enough, sometimes, pressing this point home to men who knew about our concept of operation, but did not want to accept it ... let alone pressing the point with people who did not, and were not even allowed to know, our operational concepts.

For the Selous Scouts a prisoner presented a whole gallery of different pictures with endless permutations and the probability of immediate rich rewards.

For example, if a terrorist group was attacked by Fireforce and all were killed with the exception of one or two prisoners, we could turn those prisoners and adopt the group's identity, and function as them in an adjacent area sufficiently far enough away from any locals who could identify them. Or, we might appear in the guise of a new group just arrived from Mozambique. In this instance the newly turned terrorists would introduce our callsign to the contactmen and *policemen* and establish their bona fides with the local population.

For a prisoner to be of any use to us, it was absolutely vital that his identity was totally protected and that neither the locals in the area of the contact, or anyone back at the Security Force base knew of his capture or even of his existence. If it was ever necessary for him to be taken into an area to make vital indications, he would be taken with a hood covering his head so that his identification was impossible.

But even where a prisoner had become compromised or blown, we could still get useful service from him, with him acting ... as we termed it ... as *a rear-rank instructor*, pointing out the principal contactmen and other people who could be of use to our groups in particular areas.

We once had one man for example ... a Detachment Commander ... who although utterly compromised, still assisted positively in the capture of forty-six terrorists within a space of two weeks.

When a captured terrorist was brought into a Selous Scout fort, the first priority was to give

him the best possible medical attention available, for he was often wounded and this sometimes meant immediate surgery.

Until this time the only things said to him had been concerned purely with his health and physical welfare, and astonishingly enough to the captive, he saw that everything had been done to ensure his life was saved. Because of this, whether consciously or unconsciously, a feeling of gratitude would begin to permeate his mind.

As soon as possible after this, the Special Branch men attached to the Selous Scouts, both Africans and Europeans, would get down to talking to the prisoner, for psychologically it was the perfect moment for them to commence their interrogation and in nine cases out of ten the information just poured out, almost as soon as they began.

The only thing captures were generally reluctant to admit was their involvement in any murders their group might have committed. But, in the instance where the murders had been committed by people in the group other than themselves, they were usually only too happy to speak about it.

After the interrogation, depending upon the importance of the man in the terrorist structure, his knowledge and the positive effects he could bring to bear on our operations, the decision was taken whether to recruit him into the Selous Scouts or not.

The recruitment of the terrorist itself was a fairly simple matter.

We had soon found that the best recruiting method was to send another former terrorist to visit him in hospital. He would draw up a chair by his hospital bed, and have a long conversation, dwelling in particular upon the hardships the terrorists were experiencing in the bush.

He would make a point of covering the whole gambit of misery from the harsh and unsympathetic environment, the bad food, the harassment by the Security Forces and the incontrovertible fact that they always won a contact, the savage punishments metered out by terrorist leaders to their own men, and that while the average terrorist fought and died out in the bush, the leaders lived off the fat of the land in Mozambique and Zambia and flitted all over the world, squandering money donated to buy arms to help the armed struggle.

'If the situation was reversed and you were a member of the Security Forces, would you have got the good treatment you've had here?' Special Branch would finish off with.

'No,' the terrorist would reply flatly, 'I would already have been killed.'

The *tame* terrorist, would then, if he had not already been identified by the capture, for we tried, if possible, to use a recruiting agent who was already known to the captured terrorist, reveal to the astonished man that he also had been a terrorist.

Often, to complete the initial softening up process, I would be brought in, if available, and introduced as being the commander of the Selous Scouts ... *Skuz'apo* ... the people the terrorists feared more than anyone ... but astonishingly I would appear to be a nice friendly chap.

The turning itself comprised no magic formula ... no one was every beaten up by his Special Branch interrogators ... in fact, quite the reverse was the interrogational technique, as it was vital a trusting relationship be quickly established between the prisoner and his questioner.

The first weapon in the interrogator's arsenal was that by co-operating and joining the Selous Scouts the prisoner could cheat the hangman ... for even carrying arms of war in contravention of the Law and Order (Maintenance) Act, let alone being responsible for murder, for instance ... carried the penalty of death by hanging, which was a dismal prospect indeed for a newly captured terrorist to contemplate.

Having allowed him to tentatively distance himself from what would probably otherwise be an inevitable and nasty death, the next vital thing became for the terrorist to be openly distanced from his old terrorist loyalties ... following the sensible basis of not only must justice be done ... it had also to be seen to be done!

But first he faced an unenviable inquisition, for no Selous Scout callsign was ordered to take a particular captured terrorist with them on deployment ... for out in the bush our men's lives depended on them being able to trust anyone who was to their left or right ... and ... more

vitally to the point, who was standing behind them . . . so he had to make an all-out effort to convince a callsign he was trustworthy.

If he couldn't achieve it . . . it invariably meant a handover to the Police, so that true justice could take its lawful and inexorable course towards the steps of the gallows.

Assuming, as happened in the vast majority of cases, he was successful in reassuring the tough Selous Scouts, both black and white, and a number of other suspicious people who had once been terrorists themselves, of his bona fides, he'd then be taken out on deployment to prove them.

This proof meant showing the good faith of setting up his friends and former terrorist comrades for the capture or the kill.

Once that had been exercised, to the detriment of ZANLA or ZIPRA, he was compromised . . . totally compromised . . . and, whether he liked it or not, there was no going back.

Added to all this, the now turned terrorist had a sweetener . . . one he hadn't experienced while a terrorist . . . a cash lump sum for joining the Scouts, and thereafter a good salary.

While all of this had been in progress, no political question had ever been put to him . . . he'd never been asked if he supported Nkomo, Mugabe or Smith . . . for it was a question better not asked. It had not been suggested he was to fight for Rhodesia, Zimbabwe/Rhodesia or Zimbabwe. He had not been asked either to fight for his Selous Scouts' comrades, be they officer or non-commissioned officer, white man or black man, Rhodesian Frontist, ZANLA or ZIPRA . . . soldier or turned terrorist . . . because once out there in the bush the answer was taken for granted, as each man's life was interdependent on the others.

In truth, his change of loyalty could be compared to the old British military call for loyalty . . . not for king . . . not for country . . . not for this man, nor for that man . . . but for something irresistible . . . for a band of brothers and comrades known as a regiment. In our case it was the Selous Scouts . . . and that was a difficult cause indeed to deny.

So, as the Special Branch with their inimitable expertise set up the deal . . . the all-important consolidation was done by the only men who could possible have done it . . . the operators of the Selous Scouts in the field.

It must never to be forgotten that this was a life and death issue for the Selous Scouts in the field . . . for, if they made an error in character judgement and the turned terrorist turned yet again, then it would likely cost them their lives. To their lasting credit, only a few mistakes were made in those years of Rhodesian warring.

So, the turning of a terrorist was relatively simple. The process commenced with unexpectedly humane treatment, followed by an offer which would be foolish to refuse, the forcing of him to make a total commitment, ending with trust and acceptance into the ranks of a fine body of men.

Whenever it was possible, after a terrorist had turned, we endeavoured to uplift his entire family and bring them back to live with us in the barracks at Inkomo. This had the two-way effect of binding him even more closely to us, and also giving him peace of mind so he could devote himself to operations secure in the knowledge that the terrorists were not exacting bloody reprisals against his loved ones.

His family, once they were with us, received free rations, housing, medical and schooling, while the *tame* terrorist himself drew the identical salary to a regular soldier, the only difference being the Special Branch, instead of the Army, paid the salary.

Over the years a considerable number of these *tame* terrorists approached me with a view to becoming regular soldiers of the Selous Scouts. Our African soldiers, while happy to have them as *tame* terrorists did not, at first, particularly relish the idea of them becoming regular soldiers, but after some time they agreed that it was only just that they should be given the opportunity.

There were only a few, in fact, who passed the initial recruit course and the subsequent tough selection course, but those who did, turned out to be absolutely first-class soldiers.

I am certain I was the only regimental commander in the Rhodesian Army who had soldiers under him who'd not only been trained in Rhodesia, but who'd also undergone training courses in Russia, Cuba, China or Bulgaria, as well.

I think one of the best illustrations of the bonds which developed between these *tame*

terrorists and the regular soldiers, particularly between them and their white group commanders, was the occasion when I discovered, in retrospect, that Bruce Fitzsimmons had crossed the border into Mozambique without permission, taking with him two African soldiers and seven *tame* terrorists.

I sent for him and dressed him down, pointing out how simple it would have been for his *tame* terrorists to have captured him, and used him as their passport to rehabilitation with ZANLA.

'Sir,' said Bruce growling through his beard, 'they are my men . . . I totally trust all of them.'

There were odd occasions when we detected that something was not quite right with a *tame* terrorist because it could be sensed he was not totally at ease. As a situation like this was clearly fraught with potential danger, we would immediately commence a further investigation into his background in order to discover what was wrong, so we could reassure either him or the men of the particular group operating with him.

During the early days, one particular turned terrorist led Stretch Franklin right past a terrorist camp on three different occasions, which when we found out, looked very suspicious indeed.

When an in-depth investigation was hurriedly carried out, it was discovered he had been responsible for the murder of two Police constables, whose bodies he had disposed of by stuffing them down antbear holes. He hadn't mentioned this to the Special Branch during the initial interrogation and he'd been walking around in a perpetual dread, wondering what they'd do to him if they found out.

Winston Hart took him aside and told him that we were aware of what he'd done, but that as far as we were concerned, it was all water under the bridge. The Selous Scouts were concerned only with what occured in the future . . . what was in the past, was in the past.

He immediately brightened up and changed his attitude, and as a result, we achieved some very fine terrorist kills while working from his knowledge.

Tanzanian Interlude: April, 1974

Bruce Fitzsimmons came up on the set to report that a decrepit old *Mudala* . . . an old African man, had appeared unexpectedly at his base, when he had been out of hiding, and had recognised him as a white man.

It will be recalled that it had become the norm for the locals to have free access to terrorist bases and these comings and goings had made life exceedingly difficult for the European members of the pseudo groups who had to stay almost permanently hidden.

It was impossible to release the ancient man, who according to Bruce was putting on quite a show, pretending he had not observed any black painted, but clearly white *freedom fighters*, at the camp.

The African Scouts, playing him along, enquired of him if he would like to visit Tanzania, and the old chap expressed delighted enthusiasm at the idea.

He said he had walked from the far end of Chiweshe . . . a long way indeed . . . because he had heard so much of the comrades. He had been determined to see an example of this exciting breed before he died . . . Tanzania would be even better.

The Scouts went with him to the summit of a hill, well away from their base, telling him all the time that a Tanzanian Air Force helicopter would soon arrive, pick him up and fly him to Tanzania.

The old man, at first doubtful, became ecstatic with joy when a helicopter actually appeared and landed. His ecstacy was replaced by thoughtful puzzlement when he caught sight of me . . . the only other passenger. Confusion was clearly registered on his sunken features as the aircraft took off.

Twenty minutes afterwards we touched down on the landing pad at Centenary. I got out first and held his arm to help him to alight.

'Well, *Mudala*,' I said, 'here we are . . . Dar Es Salaam.'

He looked at me and shook his grizzled head. 'No, *Ishe* . . . we are in Centenary.'

I led the thoroughly bemused octogenarian to the Special Branch offices, and there the Special

Branch personnel and I had a long chat with him, to find out exactly what he had seen out there in the bush.

He made no bones about his all-consuming desire to meet the guerillas, and emphasized that all those he had met so far, were very good men indeed. Then he paused and lowered his voice.

'There was one very bad man though . . . a *Curry Bunya* . . . an Indian. Ah, that one,' he said shaking his head conspiratorily, 'he was very bad.'

It seemed realistic to assume the old boy was well and truly in his dotage and was bewildered by the strange and startling events which had disrupted his declining years.

We decided he presented no threat to the security of Bruce Fitzsimmons' group, as it was scarcely likely the villagers would believe his stories which would be put down to the incredible ramblings of a senile old man. But, just to be sure, the Special Branch kept him in the Police camp witness lines for a week with an unlimited supply of liquor. This ensured that every morning he woke up with a monumental hangover.

When sufficient time had elapsed, he was taken by vehicle and dropped off at a point close to his village.

By then there was no doubt that his relatives wouldn't even listen to his accounts of the wonderful adventures he had experienced.

Portugal's Retreat from Africa

On the 25th April, 1974, the armed forces of Portugal staged a successful *coup de etat* and overthrew President Caetano. General Antonio de Spinola, the leader of the MFA – Movement of the Armed Forces – became the new President.

Four days afterwards on the 29th April, de Spinola said he did not believe Portugal's three overseas provinces of Mozambique, Angola and Portuguese Guinea were ready for independence, although the new regime accepted, for the first time, the principle of self determination.

Forty-seven days afterwards on June 11th, he said, in a speech made while swearing in the Governors of Angola and Mozambique, that independence for the overseas provinces had to be a three stage process commencing with a ceasefire, followed by a referendum . . . then, if the results showed it was the will of the people . . . independence.

Ninety-three days afterwards, on the 27th July, he made another statement in which he immediately recognised the right of all the overseas territories to independence and said his Government would immediately get down to the job of transferring power and, as a consequence to this, June, 1975, was set as the time when power in Mozambique would be handed over to FRELIMO.

The Portuguese Army, although it had been far from beaten, had lost all its sense of direction and purpose from the time of the coup on, and they, long before de Spinola admitted in high sounding phrases that independence was being given to the African provinces, had decided the war was a lost cause. They withdrew to their barracks and bases and refused to fight, being only concerned with getting out and sailing back to Lisbon as soon as possible.

FRELIMO appeared suddenly in the towns and, long before the so-called independence date, FRELIMO became the *de facto* government of Mozambique, even if not the *de jure* one. To their surprise they had been projected into power ten years ahead of their own schedule. They formed a transitional government in October, 1974.

Suddenly Rhodesia had three thousand kilometres of hostile border to defend, for it soon became apparent that FRELIMO's Samora Machel, who was to become the President of Mozambique, had pledged his support for the terrorist war against Rhodesia. The only secure border Rhodesia was left with, was the relatively small piece where the country abutted South Africa.

To contain the threat, the nation's Territorial Army soldiers would be faced with an ever increasing call-up frequency which would soon have markedly adverse effects upon white morale and the country's economy. In addition to this, our lines of communication to the ports of Beira and Lourenco Marques . . . soon to become Maputo . . . our main routes for imports and

exports, were at the mercy of the Mozambique Government and could be cut off at their whim.

Pressure was applied to Rhodesia by South Africa . . . the South African Police who had been assisting the Rhodesian Security Forces since 1967, when the South African African National Congress' terrorists commenced fighting alongside Nkomo's ZIPRA . . . and helicopters, helicopter pilots and technicians . . . began to be withdrawn. Exports as well as imports to Rhodesia were suddenly experiencing delays while being carried by South African Railways, which had never occurred before.

Bowing to the pressures, the Rhodesian Government resumed talks with Joshua Nkomo, the leader of ZAPU (ZIPRA), and Ndabaningi Sithole, the then leader of ZANU (ZANLA), who were both released from detention.

Afterwards the African National Council led by Bishop Muzorewa, held talks with the Rhodesian Government in December, 1974, after which the African nationalists agreed to a ceasefire.

The Security Forces protested vigorously about the implementation of the ceasefire, which became even more voluble when four members of the South African Police, who had gone to meet a terrorist leader under the so-say protection of the ceasefire agreement, were treacherously murdered.

This awful incident resulted in an incredibly nebulous instruction being issued to the men of the Security Forces, which did nothing to raise morale. Whoever it was who originated this half-baked order had clearly never been in a firefight.

'. . . shoot all terrorists coming into the country . . . under no circumstances may you shoot or take offensive action against any terrorists leaving the country . . .'

It was a very difficult order indeed to obey if you were out in the bush in an ambush position. After all, few footpaths could have been said to be routes in or out of Rhodesia.

However, a large number of terrorists were leaving Rhodesia during the ceasefire, but they had been ordered to return to Mozambique for rebriefing and redeployment. This included many of the old veteran commanders of the war, who were moved to places like Tete and Chimoio, to prepare training camps and border transit camps and to take command of the fresh forces who were completing their training in Tanzania.

At the same time veteran political commissars were briefed on the new areas of operation which were to be opened up all along the eastern and southern borders, and were being slipped in to *prepare* the indigenous population for the arrival of the freedom fighters.

We made strenuous efforts to be allowed to investigate the possibility of camps being built along the eastern border, but these were not greeted with any enthusiasm by the hierarchy.

Indeed, the Provincial Special Branch Officer at Umtali, viewed me with deep suspicion and regarded me as a war-monger.

'The FRELIMO want peace,' he assured me, 'and we must be careful not to upset them, otherwise we will lose the port facilities of Mozambique. But don't worry, I have agents over there who keep me completely in the picture . . . there couldn't possibly be a ZANLA build-up over there without me knowing about it.'

The potential in totally disrupting the ZANLA war machine in Mozambique was enormous, which could have had a markedly significant effect upon the war.

The ZANLA routes through Mozambique into Rhodesia, closely followed the old FRELIMO routes leading from the main training and staging camps in Zambia. While the Portuguese were in power, FRELIMO and the ZANLA terrorist organisation faced considerable logistical problems in moving their forces and military supplies to the operational areas within Rhodesia. Apart from staging posts and some small headquarter camps sited near the Rhodesian border within Mozambique, all the major ZANLA bases were situated in Tanzania, which necessitated a two or three weeks march to get to Rhodesia.

One did not have to be a military genius to see the advantages the Portuguese collapse was going to give the terrorists. Overnight they were in a position where they could use ships,

aircraft, railways or vehicles to transport their forces direct from Tanzania and right up to the Rhodesian border.

They could also construct large training bases out of Rhodesia's immediate reach within Mozambique.

We were having excellent internal successes which were seriously affecting the terrorist war machine, and there were rumblings of dissension in the terrorist hierarchy in Mozambique, many of whom wanted to wash their hands of the ceasefire and the peace talks.

Captured terrorists and information gathered up in the field began to show that dissension in ZANLA had reached epidemic proportions. As a result, mainly because of the death of Herbert Chitepo, who's car had detonated a landmine in the drive of his Lusaka home, local level coups and counter coups were taking place in Mozambique, as potential leaders jockeyed for position to grab power. Rival camps were subjected to armed attack and men suspected of being involved in Chitepo's demise were arrested, marched to Zambia and imprisoned or executed.

FRELIMO were in total disarray and in no position to effectively control or govern Mozambique, which was swiftly falling into a state of economic chaos. It was clear they were learning the realities of life the hard way, realising that there was a wealth of difference in running a guerilla army to running a country.

Their forces were ill-trained, badly equipped and in no state to provide the degree of military sophistication to effectively garrison the country. Basic things like radio communications were non-existent, so forces in one part of the country had no idea what was happening to forces in other parts of the country.

The ceasefire created a lot of dissension within the Rhodesian Security Forces who, in spite of the Portuguese fiasco, still felt on top of the war situation.

Some held the view that the departure of the Portuguese Army from Mozambique should be welcomed, as we at least now had unrestricted access to known ZANLA terrorist bases there. After all, they would say, ZANLA terrorists used to come and go through the Portuguese Army dispositions in Mozambique at will, so what difference will their going make?

The strife in the ranks of ZANLA was of great personal interest to me, and on hearing about it, I immediately went to see General Walls. I told him the position as we had heard it and suggested that, while the ceasefire inside Rhodesia was in operation, the major part of the Selous Scouts should move into Mozambique and stir up ZANLA discord.

The situation was perfect for us, with our men posing as dissident groups or even as splinter organisations, we could have systematically visited and annihilated piecemeal the existing terrorist camps in Mozambique, and remained there indefinitely too, living off the land or being resupplied by air.

By thus clandestinely entrenching ourselves in Mozambique, we would too have been in a strong position to monitor all future terrorist movements and to totally prevent the construction of rear base areas.

The havoc and confusion we had the chance to create, coupled with the demoralisation which would inevitably have resulted, would have done ZANLA inestimable harm.

FRELIMO, being very much caught up in their own problems, would have been far too busy to interfere, and in any event, they would not, at that particular time at least, have had the means to effectively supply any military efforts of their own.

The plan was turned down flat.

The reason given . . . the same dream world one I'd heard in Umtali . . . that any such activity would serve to alienate FRELIMO, who might then deny Rhodesia access to the ports of Beira and Maputo.

From a military point of view, I consider the refusal as one of the worst decisions of the war. It was destined to cost Rhodesia and the Rhodesians dearly in the years of war which still lay ahead.

It gave ZANLA a heaven-sent opportunity to establish themselves and gain the prime pre-requisite for a successful guerilla campaign, in the way of safe rear bases from which to operate.

Afterwards, as time progressed, the pattern I had predicted began to develop. Huge ZANLA

bases were set up in Mozambique, and forces who had completed basic training in Tanzania were moved by sea and air to Mozambique. Once there, they were transported by rail or road to staging camps which had been built at various strategic points inside Mozambique along Rhodesia's eastern border.

And ... Samora Machel closed his border with Rhodesia in spite of the economic consequences to his country on the 3rd March, 1976, by which time ZANLA were very firmly dug into their bases in Mozambique.

Internal Operational Difficulties: Mount Darwin: May, 1974

2-Troop, deployed in the Chironga area north of Mount Darwin and east of the Ruya River had been experiencing difficulties for many and varied reasons.

The terrorists could not figure out why they had been suffering such a rise in casualties. They knew that somehow it had to concern their security, so they immediately introduced measures to tighten it. Before, they had openly strutted about during daytime within the tribal trust lands, now they moved surreptitiously and only at night. Commanders too, of all grades of seniority, commenced changing their base camps with an increasing random frequency.

In many cases the ZANLA terrorists quickly reached the most obvious conclusions for their misfortunes ... the tribesmen were *sellouts* and were informers for the Security Forces.

It suddenly became commonplace for our men, either while on the move or while based up at night, to have to endure the agonised screams of innocent tribesmen being murdered or mutilated by the terrorists, because they were suspected informers or merely because they had been selected for mutilation or death to cow the locals by terror, and make the rest think twice before co-operating with the lawful government.

As human nature is much more vengeful, baleful and murderous than a cloud-cuckooland section of the society at large wishes to believe ... particularly once a lead has been given by resident terrorists ... it should not be surprising to learn that in communities of previously relatively peace-loving and pastural people, neighbours became quick to jump forward and falsely inform against their enemies, ensuring that they, and in many instances their entire families, from infants to grandparents, met unspeakable deaths at the hands of ZANLA.

It is for this reason ... which people sometimes forget ... that society needs the rule of law.

Yet, in those long night hours of helplessness, any thoughts of rescue or interference were quite out of the question. Although many Selous Scouts would often have given anything to have helped or rescued those poor people, they had one precious commodity they couldn't under any circumstances give ... a compromise of operation ... for a compromise would have resulted in many more innocent deaths and a sharp decline in terrorists being culled by the Fireforces.

Pfungwe and Ngarwe Areas: Internal Operations: May, 1974

I told 2-Group to detach a small section and send them eastwards beyond the Chironga area to see if they could establish the precise eastern limit of ZANLA terrorist infiltration.

Lance Corporal Lakula soon made contact with the chairman of the local ZANU party in the Pfungwe Tribal Trust Land, who was quite delighted to welcome him and his men. To Lakula's satisfaction, he immediately undertook to introduce them to a ZANLA reconnaissance group which was busily preparing the ground for the area to be opened up.

The ZANLA group, numbering six in all, led by Hope Zichirira, had been tasked to programme the Pfungwe and Ngarwe areas for a large scale ZANLA incursion, provisionally scheduled for the end of the year.

A meeting was arranged by the ZANU chairman as promised, and during the late afternoon of the 20th May, Lance Corporal Lakula and his five man section made contact with a part of the terrorist group.

It should be mentioned that by this time, due to the successful activities of the pseudo groups, special routines had been established when groups made contact with each other, and the onus of proving bona fides lay strictly with the group trying to make the contact.

At the meeting place, three fully armed terrorists in extended line, rifles held at the ready, were awaiting them.

Lakula halted the prescribed twenty paces from the terrorists and shouted greetings and slogans which, we had established, was the new drill.

The greetings were returned by the terrorists in the expectedly correct manner, whereupon Lakula and two of his men laid their rifles on the ground and walked up to the terrorists unarmed.

Lakula was then asked for passwords and cross-examined on people within the ZANLA hierachy, the names and layout of training camps and personal details of the instructors based there.

Then the terrorists smiled and the Scouts realised with relief they had passed their examination with flying colours. The principal questioner had been Hope Zichirira himself, and he invited his newly found friends to accompany them to a nearby village.

Once at the village, they all sat down in a friendly circle around a fire, while Hope Zichirira made a long speech of welcome. Afterwards they joined together to sing various ZANLA songs.

When they had finished singing, Lakula stood up to make a speech of thanks in reply to Hope's. While he was in the process, he decided the terrorists were totally unsuspecting and off their guard . . . they would be easy to capture.

During the course of his speech he made use of a pre-arranged code-phrase whereupon his men threw themselves onto the terrorists . . . Lakula made a grab for Hope Zichirira.

A violent struggle ensued in which pots, pans, burning embers and firewood was scattered about the battle area as the tightly locked struggling mass of men rolled, kicked, bit and fought in an effort to gain the ascendancy. Unhappily, and unknown to Lakula, the terrorist leader had left three other men in an ambush position on the edge of the village in case of such an eventuality, and the attempt to capture the terrorists ended abruptly when the bullets began to fly.

Lakula and his men promptly returned fire, slaying Hope Zichirira and another terrorist as they tried to escape, but the remaining terrorist they had been talking to, and his friends in the ambush position, made good their escape. It was subsequently learned they had fled the area in disorder to report to their superior.

During this fracas, Andrew, one of our first *tame* terrorists was killed, and two soldiers slightly wounded.

Lakula took his patrol to a nearby kopje and reported what had occurred by radio.

The message came through very faint and indistinct, so I got an aircraft to overfly his position and the pilot relayed the news back to me.

I instructed Lakula to leave Andrew's body where it was in the village and to order the villagers to bury it. I then arranged for a Security Force patrol to helicopter to the village the next morning to investigate the shooting *heard* during the night. This was duly done and the patrol recovered all the bodies without the Selous Scouts becoming compromised.

Lakula told the villagers afterwards that Hope Zichirira's group were not genuine ZANLA freedom fighters, but renegades who had deserted the cause and turned their hands to armed robbery. This story, which was credible and thus believed, enabled us to again deploy Lakula at a later date in that area without it creating any problems.

Andrew, a turned terrorist but a loyal Selous Scout . . . as brave as any one of us . . . was honoured by a large number of his comrades at his military funeral which took place at Bindura.

Selous Scouts Doubled in Size: May, 1974

By the end of May, after only five months of operating, one hundred ZANLA terrorists had been killed or captured as a direct result of Selous Scouts' pseudo gangs indicating targets to Fireforces. These very creditable results had been achieved with the use of only three very understrength Troops and reflected the effectiveness of our new tactics.

The dramatic improvement in the kill rate and the increasing volume of good intelligence

being produced by pseudo teams in the field, did much to improve the morale of all the troops in the operational areas, and we were inundated with requests to look at problem areas.

General Walls sent for me and instructed me to double the strength of the Selous Scouts.

'It's a sound military principle, Ron,' he said, 'always reinforce success.'

The order was something of a blow to me, for while the operational side of things had gone well, we were suffering from a severe case of over-quick expansion, and I desperately needed time and experienced personnel to man newly created, and then almost immediately expanded posts, to catch up with and get the Unit administration on a sound working basis.

The main problem was still, that due to the increasing numbers of *tame* terrorists joining us, the normal establishment of administrative personnel laid down for a regiment of our official size, could not cope.

The other problem, which arose out of the first one, was how to put this over to the Staff of Army Headquarters responsible for the postings of personnel, without letting them into the closely-guarded secret of what we are really up to.

The Staff at Army Headquarters were still bitterly smarting over the previous traumatic dressing down, which had been administered to them collectively by General Walls after my last direct complaint to him . . . so my requests for additional administrative personnel fell upon deaf *wouldn't hear* ears.

'The Independent Companies only have colour sergeants as Quartermasters . . . I fail to see why you should have a captain!'

Only when I again threatened to place matters before General Walls did things begin to happen.

The same approach applied to my seeking volunteers to fill the three extra troops ordered to be formed by General Walls.

'We can't bleed the Army for the Selous Scouts, Ron,' said a Colonel of the Staff, sullenly, 'we have to stay prepared to fight a conventional war . . . you never know when that could happen.'

I could not at that time . . . even now . . . figure out exactly who he had in mind, for there was no country on our borders who had the capability of launching a full scale conventional attack on Rhodesia, other than South Africa . . . and South Africa hardly had a mind to do that.

'A conventional war is hypothetical, but the insurgency war we are fighting is actual,' I replied. 'If we don't win the present internal war against terrorism, we won't have to bother our heads with the dangers of a conventional attack . . . because we will have lost anyway. Besides that . . . twenty European officers and non-commissioned officers and ninety African soldiers will hardly dent the strength of the Army . . . but it will have the effect of doubling the size of the Selous Scouts . . . which should if all things are equal . . .double the Army kill rate.'

The Quartermaster-General and the Service Corps' Staff at Army Headquarters were now the opposite . . . they were quite superb in fact, and went out of their way to give us every assistance possible.

The farm-base at the Trojan Nickel Mine had become completely inadequate for our purposes, both from a security and an accommodation point of view.

The difficulties of deployment of the pseudo teams into operational areas soon became a major headache . . . it had been bad enough in the days before the Selous Scouts was formed . . . smuggling them in and out of *safe houses* after dark . . . but with the Selous Scouts at its present size, this had become impossible.

When deployments were being made in the Mount Darwin area, for instance, which was often at that time, it became necessary to load the teams into trucks and drive them up there, which was laborious and time-consuming. Once there, they would be smuggled into the *safe houses*, originally obtained by Winston Hart and still in service, until night fell.

Once it was dark they were reloaded into trucks, taken into the area of deployment and dropped off, taking care the vehicles never stopped, as this would have given the game away to the tribespeople that deployments or something else equally sinister to them, was in operation.

It was cumbersome . . . terribly cumbersome and it was clear we had to find a better system of deployment.

Why not use helicopters? I wondered.

The tribesmen were used to helicopters in the *Hurricane* operational area now . . . besides, they were much easier to take in and out of an area than was a truck. Why not take them in just when the light was fading, and drop them onto kopjes, some distance away from their areas of operation? From there they could make their way slowly on foot to wherever they had been tasked to work.

We tried and it was a great improvement. For a time we continued to use the *safe houses* at Mount Darwin when making deployments from there and, naturally enough, the farm base when we were sending callsigns into the Bindura area.

At first we used just a few trusted helicopter pilots . . . who were all well-known to both ourselves and Special Branch.

They would land at the quiet end of the Mount Darwin airstrip and we would rush the teams out to them in closed trucks, making sure they couldn't be seen.

Soon, as the pressure built up, it became impossible to restrict the piloting of helicopter-borne deployments to only a select few, and it was not long before every helicopter pilot helped out.

The helicopter pilots were all of an incredibly high standard and I cannot speak too highly of them.

They never complained and were always willing to try anything if asked to, and they rarely asked why either.

Helicopters are particularly difficult aircraft to fly at night, for the pilot needs a horizon to work by . . . but the pilots, although they well knew that, also realised that the closer to night-time the pseudo groups were dropped off, the less chance there would be of a compromise. So, they invariably ignored their flying rule-book in the interests of the soldiers when going on an in-depth deployment, and it was common for them to have the problem of trying to beat the fading light on their way back to the safety of their base.

Sometimes, they took their helicopters into landing zones which were so tight the rotar blades would tip the trees . . . but they never demurred . . . they just went in like heroes to pick up the waiting callsign, or the prisoner, or the casualty, or whatever other *funnies* were waiting for them, and fly them back to wherever they needed to go.

Operationally things were much better, but it was Brigadier Derry McIntyre who came up with the solution which was to solve most of the major problems peculiar to the Selous Scouts. He suggested, that what we required was a sort of fort for operational purposes . . . somewhere where we were self contained, having offices, kitchen, sleeping quarters, store-rooms, an operations room etc., with a helicopter pad in the centre . . . but surrounding it, we needed high walls.

This would enable us to send groups out with their faces blackened and in terrorist kit . . . bring groups back the same way . . . and just as importantly, bring in prisoners . . . all of which could then be done with the utmost secrecy, for we would be completely safe from prying eyes.

We got to work with a detailed design for a fort covering all the basic requirements of the operators, the administrative staff and the Special Branch.

The final design was simple and closely followed Derry McIntyre's basic idea. It looked like a fort, in truth, with five metre high walls of corrugated iron, without any windows facing outwards. Inside were long barrack-block type structures divided up with ceiling board partitioning, to make a room for the Officer Commanding, a Special Branch officer, a Special Branch bedroom, a military office, an operations room, a certain amount of sleeping quarters, ablutions, a dining room and a store-room.

The whole place was strictly prefabricated, so if a bigger room was needed, then a wall could easily be taken out and moved or, conversely, if an extra room was wanted, then additional partitions could be put in.

The size of the fort was governed by the needs of the helicopter, as the helicopter pad was always centred amongst the buildings.

When the Bindura fort was built, and later the Bulawayo one, there was a requirement for medical facilities, so an operating theatre was added to each of them.

The Mount Darwin fort was the first and the most important, because when it was built that was where all the terrorist activity was, but as the operational areas increased or, when there was a change in emphasis by the terrorist high commands, then we changed too.

After Mount Darwin came Bindura, then Mtoko, Chiredzi, Rusapi, Bulawayo and so on.

The Rusapi fort, when it was built, never followed the pattern of the others and was, because it was fairly isolated anyway, just a collection of buildings. When the war was being fought all over the country, we commenced using a lot of temporary camps or bases instead of forts; like abandoned farms or buildings . . . like the one we had at the Hot Springs Resort in the Eastern Districts, or sometimes we just used a tented camp.

When the heat went off an area, the Selous Scouts' fort would be closed down and left as little more than a shell in the care of a caretaker, but when operations commenced in the area again, radios and equipment would be brought in virtually overnight, together with personnel, and it would come alive until the operation tailed off and the caretaker was once more left to his own devices.

The fort at Mount Darwin . . . which had been the most vital of all at the beginning of the war, was all but closed down in the latter phases, because the centre of terrorist activity had moved on and other areas of Rhodesia had become more prominent.

In addition to the fort, temporary prefabricated tin structures were also being put up at the site of our new Inkomo Barracks as an interim measure, to give us room to move and develop, while the construction of the more permanent buildings in the barracks went ahead at a slower pace.

The Body Snatchers: July, 1974

At about 17h00 on a Saturday afternoon in July, a highly irate Detective Inspector Winston Hart phoned me from Mount Darwin on the secrophone and reported that a prisoner had been captured wounded, and the Special Branch officer attached to the Joint Operational Command there, who happened to be senior to him, had refused point blank to hand him over.

Normally, I never involved myself in Special Branch hassles and always referred such matters to Superintendent Mac McGuiness, but he was away on duty elsewhere. In his absence I telephoned the Military Commander of the Joint Operational Command, who was the Commanding Officer of 1-Rhodesian Light Infantry, but as he was away, I spoke to Major Boet Swart, a good friend of mine who later joined the Selous Scouts, who was acting in command.

The Commanding Officer of the Rhodesian Light Infantry was a man of great personality who was thoroughly well liked and respected by all who came into contact with him. It was accepted practice there that the military commander chaired Joint Operational Command meetings, but he had, in an effort to encourage maximum co-operation . . . or jointery as it was known . . . made it a rule that each service representative took it in turn to chair the daily meetings.

On this particular Saturday the Air Force representative was in the chair.

This local arrangement was unknown to me, so I immediately telephoned Boet Swart to ask about the prisoner.

He agreed to look into it and call me back.

A few minutes later he did so, and said the Joint Operational Command had backed the Special Branch officer there up to the hilt, and they consequently declined to hand the captive over to us.

I was staggered by this statement and asked him if the others were aware that a decision had been made at the highest level regarding this issue and, it had been ordered that all prisoners regardless of any consideration, were to be handed over to the Selous Scouts.

Boet replied the decision was a Joint Operational Command one, decided by majority opinion . . . the Air Force and the Special Branch representatives, in fact . . . he could do nothing about it.

I slammed down the phone and in a thoroughly bad tempered frame of mind stormed off to see the Brigadier at Bindura.

I found the Brigadier who lost no time telephoning Major Boet Swart.

'Boet . . . I understand you have a prisoner . . . get him over to the Selous Scouts at Bindura immediately . . . you say you are not sending him? . . . I don't care who is chairing the Joint Operational Command . . . it should be you anyway . . . what do you mean joint decision?'

The Brigadier hung up and looked at me in amazement.

'Ron, they've refused to obey me.'

I returned to the fort in a flaming temper and gave vent to my feelings and opinions to those present with great clarity. Amongst the audience, listening to me with great interest, was the Selous Scouts' doctor based at the fort, Charles Gavin.

I phoned Winston Hart at Darwin to tell him I had failed in my endeavours, and went to bed.

During the early hours I was awakened by the banging and crashing of the gates to the fort being opened and the sound of a vehicle driving inside.

Funny, I thought . . . I don't remember giving orders for any troops to come back tonight.

I got up and went outside. Parked on the helicopter pad was the fort ambulance from which a stretcher was being unloaded, under the supervision of Charles.

'What's up, Charles?' I asked, 'someone have a contact?'

'No, Sir,' said Charles laconically, 'I've just collected the prisoner from Darwin.'

'Oh,' I said relieved, 'they had second thoughts eh? . . . decided to obey the Brigadier after all, did they?'

'Not quite,' said Charles, 'after learning from you what the position was, I collected a few volunteers and we drove over to Mount Darwin to ask personally, but they again flatly refused to hand him over.

I then demanded . . . as a doctor . . . to examine the prisoner which, after some hesitation, they agreed.

I made an examination of the capture and told the Special Branch officer who had created all the hassles in the first place, that if the prisoner was not given surgery within three hours, he would die and that I would hold the Special Branch officer responsible, and furnish a report to the appropriate authorities . . . and that,' said Charles with satisfaction, 'did it. They couldn't load him into the ambulance fast enough, and here he is . . . there's nothing much wrong with him really . . . I reckon you could deploy him in two or three days if you want to.'

The next morning the main Joint Operational Command at Bindura received a priority signal from the sub-Joint Operational Command at Mount Darwin, protesting bitterly about *high handed kidnappers from the Selous Scouts.*

Needless to say, kidnapped or not . . . they didn't get him back!

Selous Scouts: Still Growing

On 12th July, which was the earliest possible time, I moved people to the temporary tin camp at Inkomo and, on the same day, Superintendent Mac McGuiness, Commander of the Special Branch team which, by this time, had risen in strength to half a dozen men; myself and a small operational staff moved into the Bindura fort.

Three officers, each with the rank of captain, were posted to the Scouts about this time, as liaison officers. The idea, as the name implies, was to maintain a close liaison with the Army Commander at each Joint Operational Command, and also to command the Selous Scouts' groups allocated to a particular fort in each operational area.

Special Branch officers were paired with Selous Scouts' liaison officers at each fort and invariably, very close working partnerships developed.

A small operations staff was also posted to each fort as it came into operation.

Later, to remove a mistaken impression some Army Commanders at Joint Operational Commands had acquired . . . that my officers were their very own personal liaison officers . . . I changed the title from Liaison Officer to Selous Scouts' Operations Officer.

Officers Commanding, Troops, often went for months without seeing their men together as a complete troop, and it became cause for constant concern, for each troop was still a particular troop officer's command and responsibility.

Every troop, as has already been outlined, was divided into three operating sections of nine to twelve men, which included *tame* terrorists, although some of the groups *because* of the *tame* terrorists, became very much larger indeed, being twenty or thirty men strong, most of whom were *tame* terrorists.

It was rarely possible either, to deploy a troop into an area as a whole unit, because there was always the chance of a section, or one of the men in it, becoming compromised. When that happened, which was not infrequent, we had to switch the compromised section or, the compromised men or man in it away from the area concerned because he obviously couldn't be used there again, otherwise the locals would immediately twig that a pseudo group was operating near them.

Later, as the number of operational areas increased, these initial problems tended to fall away and we were often able to deploy whole troops or composite troops, which improved morale, efficiency and certainly made administration simpler.

The recruiting of the additional African soldiers required for the newly formed troops we had been authorised to form, presented an even greater problem than the one we had faced at the time the Regiment was formed, because simultaneous with our increase in size, the decision had also been made to form the 2nd-Battalion, the Rhodesian African Rifles, and experienced African soldiers were in the process of being posted from 1-Rhodesian African Rifles to 2-Rhodesian African Rifles to form an experienced nucleus, so there was a very marked shortage of experienced men around to recruit.

To overcome this very real problem, I got the blessings of Army Headquarters and approached the Commissioner of Police, requesting I be allowed to recruit African volunteers for the Selous Scouts from the ranks of the British South Africa Police.

The Commissioner agreed, but refused point-blank to allow me to handle the recruiting myself.

'We have our own way of doing things, Ron,' he told me smugly.

He most certainly did . . . and what a ponderous and highly unsatisfactory old way, his way turned out to be.

The Commissioner first appointed a Selection Board, and each Provincial Commander was ordered to select his best African Policemen and send them forward in due course for interview by the Board.

The Board, I was told on excellent authority, examined candidate's records of service and interviewed each man personally . . . then, if the candidate was considered as suitable, they *volunteered* him . . . whether he wanted to or not.

I was most concerned . . . in fact I was very unhappy . . . as it was a very fundamental and vital requirement of the Selous Scouts that every man be a volunteer.

It was certainly not the Selous Scouts' way of doing things, but needing men from the Police, I was not in a position to press the point.

Finally, some forty Policemen, mostly from the Support Unit, went through the bruising mill of our selection course and some very fine men indeed emerged, but generally speaking, they never quite seemed the same to me as the African soldiers.

Perhaps, it was because a Policeman grows up in a different service to a soldier, and learns to do things differently and, at a lower level, are never quite happy with each other. Or, perhaps it was more, as I believe, because they were left with feelings of resentment, because although they threw themselves willingly into the job, they were in essence, pressed men and not true volunteers.

Whatever it was, the mixture between soldier and Policemen in the same ranks didn't work, so when those first men finished their tours of duty with us and went back to the Police, we made no further approaches to the Commissioner to recruit more.

Kidnap of ZIPRA Official from Francistown: September, 1974

By September the furore created by our surprise visit to Francistown in March had died down.

The Special Branch assessment afterwards was that the ZIPRA hierarchy were still uncertain if their men had been abducted by the Rhodesians or by their ZANLA rivals.

Special Branch had been keeping an interested watch on the activities of a high ranking ZIPRA official recently based in Francistown. They knew he had been tasked with reorganising the ZIPRA network in Matabeleland, which had been almost totally compromised as a result of the information gained by our earlier kidnappings. According to all reports, he had put in a lot of groundwork and it seemed to be only a matter of time before a re-constituted internal network reared its ugly head once more, and made arrangements to accommodate and aid the deployment of a large number of trained ZIPRA terrorists waiting, ready to go, in their Zambian bases.

As our last plan had been so successful, we were tasked to kidnap this man too, so that the ZIPRA organisation in Botswana could once again be neutralised.

We commenced a preliminary study in conjunction with Special Branch and, after a lot of discussion, decided the task would best be carried out by three men, two Europeans and an African, with some extra support laid on for the latter stages.

Shortly afterwards, Basil Moss, now an Army Captain, Sergeant Bowerman and Lance Corporal Kandi, a fluent Tswana linguist, entered Botswana separately on different days. Basil Moss and Sergeant Bowerman drove in openly by car, while Lance Corporal Kandi, posing as a down-at-heel Tswana tribesman, came in the more energetic way by bicycle.

Superintendent Mac McGuinness, who was supervising the operation was left waiting impatiently on the Rhodesian side of the border.

Kandi's initial job was to pin-point, then mount surveillance on the house being used by the target official, the address of which was unknown. When he had established the house and ensured he was in residence, he would contact Basil, who would take things from there.

The Europeans, by prior arrangement, had registered in the same seedy hotel in uptown Francistown, while Lance Corporal Kandi had booked himself into an even seedier establishment in the Francistown African location area.

Kandi soon found the target had clearly been well briefed on how to avoid a fate similar to that suffered by his predecessors, and it was an almost impossible task to shadow him. It did not take much to realise his movements were deliberately sporadic and unscheduled, and any information on his movements that Kandi came by from local sources, inevitably turned out to be wrong.

After much frustrating effort over many days, Basil was on the brink of ordering an abort of the mission, when Kandi unexpectedly came up with a last-minute confirmed report that the target had moved house and was living at the far end of town.

The original plan had called for the timing of the kidnap to be notified back to Mac McGuiness, whereupon a support party would be sent into Botswana that night by a little used bush-road, take over the prisoner after his abduction and escort him back to Rhodesia with them. This would enable Captain Moss and his co-conspirators to return to their hotels in Francistown, book out a couple of days afterwards, and then make a leisurely and independent return to Rhodesia, without exciting the suspicions of the Botswana authorities.

This new situation, thrown up by circumstance, dictated that the kidnap should be played by ear, because the general elusiveness of the ZIPRA offical meant timings planned long in advance were out. If the opportunity arose to take him, then surely it would be ridiculous to miss it . . . another chance might not arise.

As soon as it was dark, the Scouts commenced a joint watch on the house which Kandi said their man had moved into.

They could see him clearly through the window . . . he was in the kitchen with two African ladies, talking animatedly.

Time slipped by slowly until it was the early hours of the morning . . . but still the target had made no move away from the kitchen, where he was still deep in conversation.

'He'll have to go to bed soon,' said Sergeant Bowerman anxiously. 'He can hardly stay up all night!'

'Looks like he's going now,' whispered Basil.

The trio in the kitchen stood up suddenly and then the light went out.

'We'll have to give 'em half an hour before we bust in,' cautioned Basil.

Corporal Kandi, very conscious of the passing time, glanced worriedly at his watch . . . if the target took too long to go to sleep, they would have to abort . . . it was essential they get him out of Botswana during the hours of darkness.

'What now!' asked Sergeant Bowerman in anguish . . .

The lights in the lounge suddenly came on, and through the open curtains the watchers caught sight of the target and the two women with him.

Three pairs of Selous Scouts' eyes lowered in disbelief, as the three people sat down and recommenced their discussions in the comfort of the lounge.

'We can't wait any longer,' said Basil. 'We'll have to get him now . . . awake or not.'

Instructing Sergeant Bowerman to stay with the getaway car to keep watch, Basil Moss and Kandi crept up to the door.

Basil nodded as a signal and Kandi rapped authoratatively on the door panels.

There were sounds of movement inside and moments later the target himself . . . a very big man indeed . . . opened the door.

'Yes?' he asked.

Without hesitation, Basil and Kandi threw themselves upon him.

A desperate struggle, which moved from one room to another inside the house took place, as the kidnap victim fought back desperately for his freedom.

The women gaped open-mouthed at the struggle for a few moments, then the spell broke and, screaming at the tops of their voices, they fled out of the back door and ran away into the night, just as Sergeant Bowerman ran in the house to assist.

The ZIPRA offical was finally clubbed into insensibility, dragged outside and bundled unceremoniously onto the back seat of the getaway car.

The Scouts got in after him and Sergeant Bowerman drove off rapidly into the night, anxious to clear the area before a crowd of irate neighbours gathered, as had happened on the first occasion.

Using a little-used bush road, the party crossed back into Rhodesia and handed their prisoner over to Superintendent Mac McGuiness in the early hours of the morning.

Mac though, was not too pleased when he discovered that in their haste to exit from Botswana, Captain Moss and Sergeant Bowerman had not given serious account to the fact that they had left their baggage and passports at the hotel in Francistown, and that their accounts had been left unpaid.

'This,' said Mac McGuiness severely, 'might blow the gaff and seriously embarrass the Government.'

Sergeant Bowerman, who had previous associations and contacts in Botswana, and who likely had not been seen by the women because he had been outside the house during most of the fight, immediately volunteered to return and rectify things. Then, without further ado, he climbed back in the car and bravely drove back to Francistown alone, narrowly evading several Police road blocks which had been erected on all the main exit roads out of town.

The following morning, after having a peaceful but relatively short night's sleep in his hotel room, Bowerman made some calls in town to confirm his cover as a sales representative for a Bulawayo company.

During the course of the morning he nearly bumped into a squad of Police, accompanied by two large and clearly aggravated African women, who were stopping Europeans and questioning them. Several unfortunates, he found out afterwards, had been arrested and carted off to the Police Station for further questioning.

Sergeant Bowerman had little difficulty in deciding it was time to go, so he quietly made his

way back to the hotel, collected Captain Moss's passport and personal kit from his room, paid both hotel bills and then drove back on the main road to Rhodesia.

In concealment within the car were his weapons and a radio transmitter, which worried him more than a little, as he knew there was a strong possibility of search at a Police road block.

Then, a hare ran into the road across the path of his vehicle and he ran over it. He stopped and put it in his car.

Soon after this, the thing he had been dreading occurred . . . there was a road block ahead, manned by a group of armed Policemen who were waving him down. There was nothing he could do but slow down and stop.

A Sergeant sauntered over to the driver's window, leaned down and started questioning him. As he did so, his eyes quartered the interior looking for suspicious items, until they focussed on the carcass of the unfortunate hare.

'Where did you get that?' he asked, his voice quickening in interest.

'Run it over . . . would you like it?' Sergeant Bowerman asked casually.

The African Police Sergeant smiled in delight as he gratefully took the hare. 'Thank you, Sir,' he gestured casually for the relieved Selous Scout to continue his journey.

Mac McGuiness and his Special Branch men acquired, after interrogation, invaluable intelligence from the prisoner, which set in motion another widespread series of raids, resulting in the capture of numerous ZIPRA terrorists within Rhodesia, and the discovery of many large caches of communist weapons and equipment. And so, the ZIPRA network, which had been so painstakingly reconstructed after the last kidnap, was smashed yet again with the capture of the man who had overseen the reconstruction . . . we couldn't have got a better prisoner.

Contact and Kills: September, 1974

On the 28th September, Lieutenant Dale Collett received a radio message from one of his detached sections who'd heard from tribesmen that six ZANLA terrorists were spending the night in a village close to his headquarters.

The African Scouts passing the information, were too far away to make the suspect village by dawn.

There was no one else available, so rather than lose them, Dale decided to investigate himself, and with Corporals Chris Robins and Chunky Graham, left to carry out a reconnaissance.

They soon reached the village and crept forward until they were within listening distance of people talking at the cooking fires. From snatches of conversation which drifted over to them, it soon became clear the information they had been passed was correct . . . the terrorists most definitely were in the village. The gist of the conversation indicated too that they were staying for only one night and would be leaving early the next morning.

I received a midnight radio call from Dale, and Fireforce was put on standby for action at first light.

Just before first light, Dale moved in close and took up a position from where he could direct the Fireforce on their arrival overhead. The nagging worry which plagued him was that the terrorists might take it into their heads to leave the village before first light.

If they did, Fireforce would get there too late.

Bearing this in mind, he positioned Chris Robins to cover one likely escape route, while he, together with Chunky Graham, crept into the village through sparse cover to get close to a hut which, their earlier reconnaissance had indicated, was the one in which the terrorists were sleeping.

Chunky had ideas of blasting the hut and placed an old British Energa anti-tank grenade . . . the grenade is projected by means of a ballistite cartridge which produces pressurised gas that projects the grenade . . . on his rifle.

A few moments after taking up a suitable position to enable Chunky to do this, three fully armed terrorists suddenly appeared out of the half light of the new day . . . and . . . walked straight towards them.

Chunky broke into an understandably cold sweat, for an Energa grenade, while perfect for lobbing into buildings, was of little use against three well-spaced out men in the open.

Dale and Chunky froze into immobility, then, just when they were certain they must be seen, the terrorists paused and one commenced urinating . . . a mere seven metres away from the watchers.

Hoping against hope that the terrorist had a large and copious bladder, Chunky quickly and silently removed the Energa grenade from his rifle, cocked it, removed the ballistite cartridge, replaced it with a ball cartridge, and then re-cocked his weapon.

The terrorist relieved himself gratefully and then adjusted his clothing, while still talking animatedly to his friend.

Dale and Chunky opened fire simultaneously, killing all three terrorists, but before they could exchange congratulations, they were themselves subjected to heavy return fire by three surviving terrorists.

Chris Robins, in his position as a one-man stop group, moved forward to see what was going on. The remainder of his story is taken from the citation for the Bronze Cross of Rhodesia which he was later awarded.

'. . . *moving through ground devoid of cover and completely exposed to fire, Lance Corporal Robins, with no thought for his own safety and showing great personal gallantry, outflanked and assaulted the terrorist position, and single handedly, killed three terrorists.*'

The Fireforce, sped on by Dale Collett's call for assistance when he was fired on, came soon afterwards, but the Rhodesian Light Infantry officer who arrived, keen and ready for battle, was very beady-eyed when shown six dead terrorists, which Dale had thoughtfully lined up in a neat row, ready for his inspection.

'I thought your job was only to find 'em . . .' he complained most bitterly.

Internal Operations: Chesa African Purchase Area: November, 1974

A section of 3-Troop, commanded by Sergeant Bruce Fitzsimmons, was deployed in early November. His mission was the total elimination of the terrorists' organisation in the Chesa African Purchase Area. This area had been totally subverted and was a hotbed of ZANLA inspired terrorism and, because of the stranglehold the terrorists had on the locals, intelligence had dried up. A number of fruitless Security Force operations had been mounted in the Chesa, and this was causing mounting concern.

Bruce had no illusions as to the difficulties he was facing, but 3-Troop had already begun to build up an enviable record of success, and he was determined his men would pull this one off too.

Bruce, a strong and determined regular soldier, had commenced his career with the Rhodesian Light Infantry. Experienced and very professional in approach, he had quickly won the esteem and respect of his African subordinates, who would have followed him anywhere.

Special Branch had gone to considerable pains to ensure he was given the best possible briefing on the area.

We were fortunate to have recently acquired the services of a newly *tame* terrorist who was familiar with Chesa, and had acquaintanceship with most of the important ZANLA contactmen in the area. Once in, this *tame* terrorist met up with a contactman and explained to him that the Scouts were a new group which had recently come in from Mozambique. He went on to say that the contactman they had expected to link up with in the Kandeya Tribal Trust Land, adjacent to Chesa, couldn't be located . . . it was assumed the Police had picked him up and they had left the Kandeya in a hurry after three contacts with the Security Forces, which had left them believing the place was full of dirty sellouts and not safe to operate in. For this reason they had decided to switch operating areas. Were there any groups in Chesa, that he knew of, whom they could join up with?

The contactman showed keen interest in their appearance, but asked many shrewd questions clearly designed to catch them out. Finally, after a lengthy question and answer session, he ap-

peared satisfied, and said he would see the local ZANLA commander and see what he had to say.

After a few days a letter from the Chesa Detachment Commander was brought to them.

'Who are you? What is your business in this area?'

A series of letters were exchanged while the terrorists tried to establish whether the new group was genuine or not.

Finally, the Detachment Commander requested that two of them should accompany the contactman to a meeting place.

Lance Corporal Burundu and Trooper Rangutu immediately volunteered and went off with the contactman.

Waiting for them at the rendezvous were two heavily armed and suspicious terrorists.

After the satisfactory calling out of passwords, they were put through the usual elaborate drill to establish their identification.

'Where were you trained? Who trained you? Tell us the names of your instructors? What route did you use to come into Zimbabwe? Describe the staging camp at . . .'

While this was going on, the Scouts knew they were in the killing ground of an ambush . . . one false move or a wrong answer would spell their immediate demise.

Eventually the terrorists expressed themselves satisfied, and after the Scouts had laid their weapons on the ground, the terrorists moved forward to greet them.

There were friendly greetings and handshakes, and two more terrorists emerged from their ambush position and joined them . . . more handshakes, more political slogans and more back-slapping.

Burundu, a most engaging character, suggested to his new friends that they accompany him to his camp, so they could meet the remainder of his comrades and have joint discussions on how they might best assist in the fighting.

The terrorists, their suspicions allayed, immediately agreed, and they all set off. Once there, the Detachment Commander and his men were introduced all round to Burundu's men.

The terrorists were thoroughly taken in and discussion was eagerly joined to see how they could best combine their efforts in the war against the hated Boer . . . the *Mabunu* . . . both of which in strict unflattering terms, meant the white Afrikaner . . . but in the Rhodesian war, it meant each and every white man. The terms, incidentally, were fastened onto by both terrorist parties, as they wished the world to believe the lie that they were fighting only Afrikaans-speaking white people, for whom, they reasoned, there was less world sympathy.

While these talks dragged on, Lance Corporal Burundu made his excuses and disappeared into the bush on the pretext that he was answering an urgent call of nature. Once out of sight he changed course and climbed to the summit of a low hill. There he retrieved his radio-set and made contact with Bruce Fitzsimmons, and briefed him on the incredible turn that events had taken.

When he returned to the discussions, the Detachment Commander was loudly criticising the ZANLA High Command for not producing sufficient guns or ammunition for the *cadres* to fight the war. He mentioned that while he had reasonable quantities of mines and ammunition, he had been forced to husband his stocks, and meanly eke them out so he could maintain a steady pressure on the Security Forces in the area.

Lance Corporal Burundu said thoughtfully, that if this was the case with their new friends, it was fortunate they had met up, because he had brought a large quantity of mines and ammunition in from Mozambique by carriers . . . and . . . he was quite happy to pool it. He went on to say that he had left all of it, under the guard of some of his men, at a secure base in Kandeya, while he and the others had come to make contacts in the Chesa.

'Maybe,' he suggested, 'we could go there together, so you can view the stuff and meet the others . . . particularly our Section Commander?'

Burundu went on to extol his Commander's soldierly virtues.

The Detachment Commander became suddenly doubtful and suggested instead he would prefer to stay with Burundu, while two of his men accompanied two of Burundu's to Kandeya.

Burundu agreed, without hesitation, and the four men, two real terrorists and two Selous Scouts, departed in the direction of Bruce Fitzsimmons' base.

While they were en route, Burundu, pleading the excuse of his upset stomach again, managed to get away and radio the information that two terrorists were on their way over, with two Scouts.

When the little party reached the base of the kopje upon which Bruce was camped, the Scouts hesitated.

'You will have to bear with us I'm afraid,' they said, '. . . our Commander is a very cautious man. He refuses to trust anyone until he is completely sure of him . . . he's an awkward bastard . . . you know how it is? I'm afraid one of us must first go up and report our arrival. Afterwards, we will take you up one by one.'

The two terrorists, impressed by the security arrangements, readily agreed and blissfully went singly up the kopje where they were captured.

At first, they refused to believe they were prisoners of the Selous Scouts. Then, their nightmares became reality when Bruce stepped from cover and scowled at them through his great bushy black beard. It was a sight designed to make the heart of even the bravest terrorist miss a beat.

The practised and high powered conversion methods were swung into action as the prisoners were questioned for the remainder of the day and well into the night. Finally, came *the offer they couldn't refuse* and, needless to say . . . they didn't.

The *tame* terrorist, who appeared to have the weakest character, accompanied the Scouts who had brought him in, back to where Burundu and Rangutu were waiting with the terrorist Detachment Commander.

Burundu, making frequent use of his excuse of an upset stomach, had been constantly kept in the picture by Bruce, who sent a constant stream of radio messages to myself, my Operations Staff, and Superintendent Mac McGuiness, to keep us informed too. We were all very apprehensive as we sweated it out while awaiting the outcome.

The Scouts and the newly *tame* terrorist made a wary return to the camp, wondering all the while if Burundu and Rangutu had survived the night. If things had gone wrong, their own reception would likely be a burst of gunfire.

To their not inconsiderable relief, all was well . . . indeed better than well. The Detachment Commander, a tough but brave man of evil reputation, had struck up a great friendship with Burundu. He listened with rising interest, while the newly turned terrorist, unbeknown to him no longer his man, reported back, speaking in glowing terms of the smart men of high calibre he had met, and their vast supplies of mines, ammunition and weapons, which he had examined.

Without further ado, the Detachment Commander agreed that both he and his deputy would accompany Burundu back to meet his senior.

Once at Bruce's base, there was a replay of the previously successful procedure.

Corporal Burundu, the newly *tame* terrorist and the other Scouts, except for Trooper Rangutu, went up the hill to report their arrival. Trooper Rangutu stayed alone with the Detachment Commander and his second in command at the base of the hill. This was calculatingly done to allay any remaining suspicions the ZANLA officers might have had.

Shortly afterwards, Burundu came down the hill hoping the terrorists would not attach any significance to the fact he was now carrying a sixty millimetre mortar instead of an AK-sub-machine gun as before. He apologised profusely to the Detachment Commander, shaking his head in mortification.

'My boss is very cautious . . . sometimes I think he's too cautious. He still insists on you coming up to see him one at a time. He says Rangutu must take your deputy up now, and that you must go up with me afterwards.'

The Detachment Commander, thoroughly taken in, was not concerned and even remarked on the sagacity of Burundu's commander.

Trooper Rangutu smiled and beckoned to the second in charge and they marched up the hill.

Burundu glanced from the corner of his eye at the Detachment Commander, terribly conscious that even the slightest of false moves, even at this late stage, could still mean a shoot-out. Burundu started to kneed his stomach with his fingers, playing out the last act of the drama.

'I wonder what's taking so long up there. My stomach is playing up . . . if I carry on much longer I'll crap my pants.'

'Go into the bushes,' laughed the Detachment Commander easily, 'I'll stay here and wait for Rangutu to come down . . . I'll tell him to wait for you.'

'I don't know,' complained Burundu doubtfully, 'supposing a Security Force patrol comes along while I'm alone and having a crap . . . I've only got a mortar. They'll really catch me with my pants down!'

The Detachment Commander laughed even more and held out his AK-sub-machinegun. 'Take this if it worries you and give me the mortar. I'm okay here. If anything happens I'll just slip up the hill to your base.'

'Thank you,' said Burundu handing the Detachment Commander the mortar. He suddenly seemed to have made a miraculous recovery from his stomach cramps, for he straightened up, cocked the AK and pointed it at his companion.

'Raise your hands and surrender or I'll kill you.'

'Have you gone quite mad?' exclaimed the Detachment Commander.

'Do you remember those devils in human form, the Selous Scouts, we discussed yesterday?' Burundu asked.

'Of course,' said the terrorist impatiently, 'but . . .'

'Well, I'm one of them,' said Burundu his gun unwavering.

The Detachment Commander gasped, then his knees buckled and he sat on the ground with a bump.

'Come on,' said Burundu gesturing his gun, 'up the hill . . . there's a man up there who wants to meet you.'

Minutes later the Detachment Commander found himself facing Sergeant Bruce Fitzsimmons . . . it was the moment of truth. A long discussion followed, surprisingly enough to the terrorist, without acrimony, which brought home to him that he was not going to be summarily executed. Then he started to see the humour in his situation, and in spite of his circumstances he laughed at the way he'd been fooled.

Bruce learned there were another four men including the detachment's overall second-in-command, based in the Kangare Mission area. There was another separate group too, also in the Chesa, under Section Commander Gumbo.

Eventually, after some hard horse-trading by Bruce, the Detachment Commander agreed to come across to the side of the Security Forces. The bargain they struck was that neither he nor his men would be prosecuted before the courts for any of the crimes they had committed while terrorists.

The possibilities brought about by capturing and turning this Detachment Commander seemed endless . . . through him we would be able to control the whole ZANLA network in the Chesa African Purchase Area.

It also held possibilities that in the not too distant future, we could . . . we in fact did . . . establish liaison with all the ZANLA Detachment Commanders to the south, east and west of the Chesa.

This, once it had been achieved, enabled us to infiltrate pseudo groups into those other areas and we successfully set up target after target for the ungentle attention of the Fireforces. We had also a potential cover under which we might move men back, step by step, to Mozambique, following the line of staging posts to the training camps, which at the time, were undergoing a rapid expansion.

But, all of that was still in the future, and before we would be able to embark upon any of those adventures, we first had to consolidate the situation in the Chesa African Purchase Area. First it

was vital we ensure that every terrorist subordinate to the turned Chesa Detachment Commander, was captured or wiped out before the news of his change of heart leaked out.

A team comprising one of the newly captured terrorists and seven Selous Scouts, with a letter of introduction from the former Detachment Commander, went off to make contact with his second in command in the Kangare Mission area.

Contact was established with ease and the pseudos were invited to spend the night at the Kangare terrorist base.

In the early hours of the next morning, when everyone was asleep and life was at its lowest ebb, the Selous Scouts, on being given a prearranged signal, jumped the terrorists. During the violent struggle which ensued, the Deputy Commander saw his chance and broke away, turning his AK-sub-machinegun on the Scouts.

Trooper Rangutu rushed towards him and the terrorist officer's nerve broke and he turned and fled.

Trooper Rangutu raked the darkness with a blistering burst of fire and cut him down.

The remaining three terrorists had meanwhile been quickly subdued and tied up. Then, they were taken back to base and put face to face with their, by then, very *tame* Detachment Commander. Once they had assimilated the situation, there were only a few minor problems in getting them to follow suit.

Under the guidance of the captured terrorists, all the arms caches they knew about were located and the contents uplifted.

After this, plans to capture Section Commander Gumbo and his men were set in motion, and it was not long before a mixed team, consisting of former terrorists and Selous Scouts, had successfully made contact with him. A letter from the Detachment Commander ordering him to appear at his base, was handed to him.

Their impeccable credentials immediately gained the confidence of Gumbo and it became a simple matter to repeat the earlier exercise and capture all nine of his terrorists. On that occasion the surprise and shock they experienced was so complete, there was not even a vestige of resistance offered.

Sergeant Bruce Fitzsimmons of course, had masterminded the whole operation, controlling it from the concealment of his base camp.

Because of the comparatively large number of terrorists in Gumbo's group, Bruce sent most of his men to effect the captures, remaining at his base with only one African Scout and four very freshly captured and turned terrorists . . . all still armed to the teeth . . . for to have to disarmed them would have shown a lack of trust, and trust was the cement which bound a *tame* terrorist to the Scouts.

Gumbo was decidedly and very clearly put out by the turn of events, and although he eventually agreed to join up with us, there was something about his manner which worried the African Selous Scouts.

I discussed with Bruce the question of picking up Gumbo and removing him from the scene . . . but the recently turned terrorists actually outnumbered the Scouts and were still fully armed . . . a removal could easily have turned an already delicate situation into a total disaster.

The Detachment Commander was totally on our side and, in fact, enjoying his changed circumstances. It was a situation that all pseudo operators dreamed of . . . a Detachment Commander and his entire establishment, including the terrorist network amongst the local population, were now subject to Selous Scouts' orders. In a period of a mere three weeks we had killed or captured seventeen terrorists which represented the entire ZANLA effort in the Chesa African Purchase Area, and raked in their total stockpile of weapons, ammunition and mines.

Unfortunately, the strain of living in this environment began to tell on Bruce and his men, and it became imperative they be brought out for a break. The infiltration of another troop was made, and Bruce's section was withdrawn, albeit piece-meal to allow continuity, until the new men regained the trust of the recruited terrorists.

Regrettably, the members of the relieving troop, understandably not having the same feel for

the situation as Bruce's section, fell out with Gumbo. A short contact resulted between the Scouts and Gumbo and his section, who all remained loyal to him . . . no one was injured, but the terrorists deserted and ran back to Mozambique.

After that, it was simply a question of time before we were fully blown, but we still had several valuable weeks left to exploit and we were able to achieve a number of very good kills by putting out the word that Gumbo and his group had turned renegade.

Personally, I had high hopes that Gumbo would be shot as a traitor on arrival back at ZANLA High Command Headquarters in Mozambique, but although he was arrested, they later released him and he afterwards continued terrorist operations in Rhodesia.

We did not lose out completely by him passing on the news of our doings, for when word of our doings in Chesa reached the ZANLA High Command, it spread like wildfire through the internal terrorist bases.

Everywhere there was consternation and panic.

It was imagined the dreaded Selous Scouts . . . the *Skuz'apo* . . . were everywhere, and deadly contacts between groups of real terrorists became a regular feature in the *Hurricane* operational area, to the unbounded astonishment of the conventional Security Force units who were not in the know as to our doings.

Groups entering Rhodesia for the first time, found great difficulty in linking up with terrorist groups already operating in the areas to which they had been allotted. They became badly dispirited and demoralised, particularly after being savagely attacked by other terrorists who were under the impression they were Selous Scouts.

One terrorist captured about this time, reported having been involved in ten firefights since infiltration into Rhodesia, but on checking his story out, we found only two had been with the Rhodesian Security Forces . . . the rest had been with other ZANLA terrorist groups.

It does not take much imagination to see why the Selous Scouts came to be viewed with such dread. From a terrorist point of view, the enemy was within the city gates . . . and . . . they couldn't even identify him.

Deprived, as they had always been, of radio communications, they relied entirely upon a system of letters and notes carried by messengers. At its best it was a slow and often unreliable method . . . at its worst, when those letters were intercepted and redrafted, so their rendezvous was not with friends, but with a tough and determined Fireforce intent on wiping them out . . . the system often became fatal.

So, what we lost on the swings by having our cover blown, we more than gained on the roundabouts by exerting tremendous physchological pressure on the ZANLA terrorist organisation by destroying what little confidence they might have had left in their cumbersomely inefficient communications system.

Operation Market Garden: November, 1974

Occasionally, in spite of continuous shifts in *modus operandi*, we experienced the odd situation where all our hard thought-out tactic changes proved to be of no avail and every group we placed in an area became blown in a very short time. One such place nestled at the foot of the Muvuradona Mountains, which straddled a route much used by terrorists to commute to and from their base camps in Mozambique.

The senior contactman in the area was well known, but he was an extremely crafty and wily old man and in spite of every clever pseudo move employed to deceive him, he had checkmated the groups time and time again.

He had a very nasty and dangerous habit of pretending he was convinced the group which approached him, was the genuine article, the only real terrorists he had ever met! He would feed them, give them nebulous snippets of information and treat them in every respect as if they were the real McCoy ZANLA. Behind the scenes, however, he was always keeping the real guerillas well advised of our every move. On top of this, he would ensure that every tribesman in the vicinity was warned that the new group were Selous Scouts . . . *Skuz'apo.*

The terrorist counter-counter insurgency tactics in this particular instance, were ingenious and certainly totally effective. Between the machinations of the contactman and the tribesmen, our groups were left in a gulf of blissful ignorance. Unbeknown to them, they were being kept in total insulation as to what terrorist activity was going on, and in particular, never became aware of the constant passage of terrorist recruits and trained terrorists moving in and out of the area, which was continuing unabated right under their very unsuspecting noses. This set of precarious circumstances, quite naturally, put our men into situations of extreme potential danger, for at any time, at the whim of the local ZANLA commander, they could be meekly led into the jaws of a trap and totally obliterated.

Winston Hart and I had often discussed this particular problem at great length and one day he came up with a clever suggestion which we decided to try out.

After making the necessary arrangements, we re-infiltrated one of the old groups, which had been well and truly blown, back into the Muvuradona. They made routine contact with the old and wily contactman, who expressed great delight at seeing the men again.

'Where have you been?' he asked.

'Oh, we were sent for by the ZANLA High Command in Mozambique and have just returned,' said our pseudo group commander, warming to his spiel. 'We have brought back an oversupply of mines and ammunition, to share with and replenish the stocks of the local sections, so the war against the hated *Mabunu* can be fought more fiercely.'

The old man looked at him shiftily . . . it was clear he could scarcely stop from smiling.

The pseudo group, to add veracity to their story, took him to a remote area of bush and unveiled from beneath a pile of branches an impressive store of war materials . . . guns, mines, grenades, explosives . . . everything designed to delight the cruel heart of a terrorist.

The contactman, made hurried but highly suitable arrangements to feed the Scouts, then sped off as fast as his spindly old legs could carry him, to seek out the local terrorist commander and tell him the delightful tale of what had transpired.

The Scouts, well satisfied the contactman had swallowed their bait, promptly relocated their explosives and arms cache for safety's sake and settled down to await developments. They knew, without doubt, the war supplies would prove an irresistible attraction to the terrorists, who, according to information, were getting desperately short.

The following evening the contactman reappeared at the Selous Scouts' camp. He looked as satisfied as a hyena who had just gorged a gargantuan meal of raw meat.

'I have spoken to the local commander,' he said, 'he is very thankful you have come and would like me to fix up a meeting so you can discuss the arrangements for the handover of the stuff to him.'

It was clear, by the blandly satisfied expression on the contactman's face, the arrangements for a very nasty ambush of the Selous Scouts had already been finalised. All that was left for them to do was to walk unsuspectingly into it.

'There is just one small problem,' said our group leader, 'we were sent back to Zimbabwe in company with a new and larger group and their commander has been placed in overall command . . . you will have to make the final arrangements with him.'

The contactman smiled incredulously . . . it was really all too good to be true . . . all those weapons and another group of *Skuz'apo* to be compromised and led meekly to the slaughter into the bargain . . . what fools the Selous Scouts were.

'I think you should take me to the Commander immediately . . . there is no time to waste,' he said, almost beside himself with joy. When *freedom* came he would certainly be well rewarded. He might well get one of those *Mabunu's* farms.

They kept him in their company until darkness fell, then led him by a circuitous and long route to the top of a kopje of tumbled boulders intertwined with twisted trees and dense bush. There, in the bright moonlight amidst a cluster of large oblong boulders, he was introduced to four men, two of whom wore large floppy hats with wide brims pulled down well over their eyes.

The introductions and polite opening gambits, as African manners and custom demanded,

were long and protracted. Then, as the conversation progressed beyond the weather, the state of the cattle and the crops, and onto the subject of the war, the dialogue on both sides became liberally dusted with the usual revolutionary slogans . . . *pamberi ne hondo* – forward with the war, and *pamberi ne Chimurenga* – forward with the revolution.

When it became apparent to the contactman the time was ripe to tell the *Skuz'apo*, that they should meet the real terrorists and walk into their tentatively arranged murderous trap, he opened his mouth to speak, but was suddenly and shockingly rendered breathless, as one of the men in the floppy hats leaned forward and jabbed him painfully in his skinny old ribs. He gasped in pained surprise.

'We've been watching you for a long time and we are not pleased with what you have been doing . . . you want to see us dead.'

'Me!' exlaimed the thoroughly alarmed contactman with nervous incredulity, 'why, I have devoted my whole life to the *freedom* cause . . . I have fed the boys, guided and protected them on numerous occasions from the danger of attack by the Security Forces. I have been arrested, beaten up and interrogated mercilessly by the Special Branch at least four times . . . but, in spite of all the torture and pain I have suffered, I never once loosened my tongue. How can you suggest I am a sellout . . . a traitor?'

'Because, old man, we are not freedom fighters . . . we are *Skuz'apo* and you have betrayed us to the real freedom fighters. You wish to lead us into their ambush so we are killed. Then you will steal our supplies.'

'*Skuz'apo*,' quavered the contactman. '*Skuz'apo* . . . I don't believe you . . . I've heard of these people, but I've never met them.' This was an awful turn up for the book he had never even dreamed of. His heart thumped in his chest and he stuttered anguished denials, his usual smooth tongue deserting him entirely.

'Oh, but we are *Skuz'apo* indeed,' continued the floppy hatted man evenly. 'What's more, your heart tells you I speak truly. I'll tell you another secret, I'm not even an African . . . I'm a white man.'

Despite the gravity of his position, this was too much for the contactman . . . he started to giggle . . . he felt his confidence returning. The *Skuz'apo* had gone too far.

'You, a European . . . your Shona is better than mine!' he said.

The African Scouts of the headquarters group not involved in this charade, who were hidden amongst the rocks, were hugging themselves to hold in their suppressed mirth.

'Take off your hat, Winston,' said the floppy-hatted spokesman, who was really the Selous Scouts' group commander, Captain Basil Moss.

The other man wearing a wide brimmed hat, Detective Inspector Winston Hart of the Special Branch, obliged and his mop of hair showed clearly blond in the moonlight.

The old man uttered a low moan like a death rattle, and collapsed to the ground. For a moment they were sure he had suffered a heart attack.

'I've sold myself,' he sobbed uncontrollably looking up at them piteously. 'I've sold myself.'

'Now listen to me old man and listen to me well,' said Basil Moss quietly, but without sympathy. 'You know we are Selous Scouts and you are aware we fully know what your game has been. But, luckily, the real freedom fighters . . . your real friends . . . are unaware what has taken place up in this *gomo*.'

He whistled a signal and the rest of the Selous Scouts appeared from their hiding places.

'You see how many of us know? Well, that is only a few of them, for in Salisbury at least another thousand men know, because we have spoken to them on our radio. They know, like us, that you are a wealthy man, and that we have taken care to identify and have a good look at your four wives . . . particularly your youngest wife who is young, sleek and very beautiful. We think it a shame your first wife hates her so much, but I guess she is jealous because you spend most of your diminishing sexual energy in her bed. We have made a list and studied all there is to know about your children too . . . particularly your sons. They are clever . . . and doing well at school. You are a fortunate man to have so many fine cattle. How do you find your new Datsun truck, by the

way? Now, if you should betray us again to the terrorists, or tell anyone else what has happened up here, we will systematically kill your family, commencing with your eldest son . . . then your youngest wife and son. Afterwards, we will slaughter all your cattle . . . then, finally, we will burn the Datsun and kill you. Have I made myself clear?'

The contactman nodded in abject misery, although his agile mind was still seeking a means to escape his predicament.

'Good,' said Basil Moss. He looked intently at the contactman, 'I can see into your head and observe the thoughts running through your mind . . . they are not very pleasant ones! I see you are thinking that as soon as we leave you here, you will run to the terrorists with your family.'

The contactman shook his head in violent denial, but a bead of cold sweat glistened on his forehead showing his lie, because this had been his precise intention.

'I wouldn't try it,' warned Basil Moss menacingly, 'because before you leave here, you must sign this.'

He withdrew a piece of paper from his pocket.

'This is a deposit form . . . for your Post Office Savings Account.' With a flourish he produced and started to count a bundle of dollar bills. 'This is the four hundred dollars we will be depositing in that account.'

'You're paying me money?' asked the contactman, totally bewildered.

'Yes, but first you must sign this other piece of paper.'

'What other piece of paper?' asked the contactman trembling.

'This receipt for the money . . . this British South Africa Police receipt for the money. Now if you, or any of your family run away, or tell the terrorists anything, we will despatch this receipt together with your Post Office book, to the ZANLA High Command in Mozambique . . . they will know exactly what it means. They will save us the trouble of finding you, as they will murder you and all your family and chop up your stock in the same horrible ways as they attended to the people you so happily pointed out as being *sellouts* to ZANLA, or as *puppets* of the Government.'

'I must agree . . . what else can I do?' asked the old contactman, shaking his head sadly. He was thoroughly beaten and he knew it.

'I thought you'd see things the *Skuz'apo* way,' grunted Basil sardonically.

He gestured to one of the African Selous Scouts to stand up. 'In future you'll meet this man twice a day at a rendezvous in the bush and tell him everything that's going on with the terrorists and everything they plan to do. Now, the first thing to do, is to see the terrorist commander and tell him we are Selous Scouts, but we suspect nothing. Tell him to lay that ambush for us here . . .' he went on to explain.

The contactman conscientiously . . . although with understandable anguish, kept to his orders and reluctantly set up a rendezvous point for the terrorist group to ambush the Selous Scouts, with promises of ample replenishments of arms, ammunition, mines and grenades, which would become surplus to Rhodesian Government requirements once the ambush was sprung.

They certainly got what they were asking for without default on the part of the Selous Scouts, but it came in a totally unexpected package deal . . . with the bullets first being fired through the FN rifles of the Rhodesian Light Infantry Fireforce, who descended literally from out of the blue in helicopters, and set to, with that experienced expertise for which they were renowned, killing each and every member of the terrorist group in the short but savage firefight which followed.

Almost finicky care had been exercised by Captain Basil Moss when selecting the rendezvous . . . a thickly wooded kopje surrounded on all sides by open mealie lands, so for the terrorists there was no escape.

Exercises of a similarly successful nature were repeated, using the same and, by now thoroughly compromised contactman, and during the course of one of these another contactman was successfully compromised and set up so he was in the same invidious position of having no option but to co-operate with the Selous Scouts.

In a matter of eight weeks, thirty-two terrorists were killed, after being set up by the combined efforts of the compromised contactmen.

Then, alas, as in all good things, it finally came to an end. One day, the first contactman to be compromised, failed to make an appearance at his twice daily rendezvous. His nerve had snapped and in spite of the probable consequences if ZANLA found out what he had been doing, he fled his village together with his entire family and crossed into Mozambique, leaving behind his stock and everything else he owned.

The other contactman came to an abrupt and rather sticky end at the hands of his terrorist friends, who grew irritable and suspicious when they noticed all the ZANLA sections operating the areas around them, were being systematically wiped out.

We missed him . . . but not for any real reasons of grief.

The reason we coded the operation *Market Garden*?

Nothing at all to do with any reasons which might be associated with the British airborne landings at Arnhem in Holland during World War-2. No, we certainly never thought of parachuting in thirty-five thousand troops. It was because we coded the first compromised contactman as *apple* and the other as *banana*. *Market Garden* somehow seemed a good omen . . . being optimistic, we had hoped we might cultivate a whole vegetable patch . . .

Omay Tribal Trust Lands: Internal Operations: December, 1974

The instructors at our Kariba training camp, although not operational, always made a point of keeping good lines of communication with the Special Branch at Kariba and it was through this liaison, I learned in December that Nkomo's ZIPRA terrorists were beginning to show their heads in the Omay Tribal Trust Land bordering the shores of Lake Kariba.

After examining the problem in co-operation with the Kariba Special Branch, I ordered the mounting of a small operation to investigate the situation. It was considered a low-key exercise and little was expected to come of it. However, the end results turned out to be quite alarming.

By the end of the operation we had captured three hard-core ZIPRA terrorists and a further thirty-seven who had been locally trained, and located a large cache of stores, weapons, ammunition and canned food.

The three captured hard-core terrorists were turned to our cause and almost immediately put to work in another small operation during which we killed two more hard-core terrorists and located another base stuffed with weapons, mines and ammunition.

Using these *tame* terrorists as fronts, our operators soon wheedled out from the locals that another three groups of nine ZIPRA terrorists . . . twenty-seven in all . . . had crossed the lake by boat and were in the process of setting up another network in the Omay, in preparation for a major ZIPRA incursion from Zambia.

However, once we started bringing Fireforce onto them and the killing had started, their plans misfired and the groups splintered and most of the members fled inland, making for the Bulawayo area from where they could cross into Botswana and make their way back to safety in Zambia.

Of major interest was the capture of a military radio of Russian manufacture, which had been used to maintain communication with ZIPRA Headquarters in Zambia. It was certainly a major advance on the system of notes and letters we had been used to up until that time.

The time had apparently come to give serious consideration to the formation of a special group within the Scouts to operate as ZIPRA terrorists. To effect this, we clearly needed to recruit more Matabele soldiers, for the bulk of ZAPU/ZIPRA support was concentrated in Matabeleland.

After this consideration had been given and a decision made, a vast amount of ground work became suddenly necessary as the operational structure and *modus operandi* of ZIPRA was totally different from the operational structure and *modus operandi* of ZANLA. The difference was easily explained, because the ZANLA terrorists had been trained by Red China, while ZIPRA had been indoctrinated and taught their trade by the Soviet Russians and their allies in the Warsaw Pact.

To get the new Matabele troop off the ground, a small number of Matabele originating Selous Scouts were posted to the troop as the nucleus of what, in finality, was to become a complete group of Scouts dealing only with the threat posed by Nkomo and his ZIPRA.

When 1974 passed into history, our scoresheet stood at two hundred and twenty-one terrorists killed or captured during our nine months of actual operations. This indicated that over a thousand terrorists had been pinpointed by our teams, as in a contact, ten percent seemed to be the capture or kill rate which was, frankly, not an inspiring figure, when one considers the dangers our pseudo operators had to go through to get terrorists on target.

In truth, some Fireforces were not terribly efficient, but some, notably the Rhodesian Light Infantry, were excellent. The kill results in contacts spoke for themselves. There were numerous factors which could affect the kill rate and many were issues over which the Fireforces had no control and certainly couldn't be blamed. One major problem was the helicopter's turbojet engine noise, which, dependent on the wind direction, could be heard seven to ten minutes from target, which gave a cautious group of terrorists ample time to get clear.

Wind direction consequently, always became an important factor when the approach of a Fireforce was determined. Sometimes too, it had been strictly our fault through bad map reading or interpretation or by bad radio *talk-ons.* These mistakes led to our operators, both black and white, becoming highly skilled at talking aircraft onto targets, and high emphasis was laid on this during initial training and retraining sessions . . . which were routine before a troop returned to operations.

We noticed, on analysis, that the kill-rate dropped dramatically during the rainy season when, of course, the overhead canopy of trees, the bush, the undergrowth and the grass was at its maximum denseness, which made it easier for terrorists to stay concealed or sneak away during sweeps by heliborne troops.

We also found that as the war progressed, so tempers grew shorter between units. If a good contact resulted from a callout, there would be considerable bonhomie between the Fireforce and the Selous Scouts; but if it was a washout or if it failed to materialise at all, there would often be bitter recriminations and witch hunts.

More than once I had to step in and check my non-commissioned officers for insubordinate language to officers in command of Fireforces, when they considered their days of hard work had been botched on the Fireforce deployment.

Reprehensible certainly, but sometimes I sneakingly felt it was understandable too!

The Regiment had expanded to six full troops with the additional strength of about fifty *tame* terrorists as auxiliaries. Housing for the families of *tame* terrorists had posed a problem at first, but this was solved by building a complex of houses at Inkomo from Kimberley brick . . . a mud and straw brick . . . which was called *Chimurenga* Lines.

The former terrorists had proved an invaluable, even if a somewhat revolutionary acquisition . . . but the unit could not have worked without the continuing flow of expertise provided by them.

We had learned that pseudo work required a large amount of flair and imagination and, that when a Selous Scouts' group became stereotyped in its operations, it almost instantly became compromised by the locals. The game was deception in its widest sense, and as well as being soldiers, we had to be accomplished actors too. The reward, if our acting was below acceptable form, was not a flurry of soft tomatoes from the stalls, but the more permanently disapproving missiles which snuffed out one's life.

Often, in our anxious efforts to keep abreast of terrorist methods and *modus operandi*, we had found ourselves more up-to-date in *Skuz'apo* detection than the terrorists in the field were themselves.

As time progressed, it became standard procedure to withdraw all operators en mass from the operational areas at regular intervals, in order to conduct regular seminars to study and discuss the latest innovations in identification signs, procedures and new songs. These were discussed and

analysed in depth and the results accrued soon made profoundly favourable effects on the kill rate when they returned to the field.

Fresh ways of bolstering the authenticity of our groups were constantly thought up. We ambushed our own vehicles – by arrangement . . . landmined old boarded Army vehicles – if we were able to persuade the bureaucrats in Army Headquarters to release them . . . and . . . directed air strikes or Fireforce attacks onto our own, naturally first vacated, camps.

We learned at an early stage too that we must be careful not to set too good an example, as this could set the tone in an area which the genuine terrorists would strive to emulate or surpass.

This had happened to us earlier in the year, in June, in fact. The Troop Commander of 2-Troop, working in the Kandeya Tribal Trust Lands, had reported his men were experiencing difficulty in getting acceptance by the locals. After discussing the situation, we decided something dramatic was merited to bring the locals around.

Now the concept of Protected Villages was just coming into being. Tribespeople were being cleared from their little penny packet villages in tribal areas, and gathered together in large central complexes in an effort to deprive the terrorists of shelter, and to make it more difficult for them to intimidate the locals into feeding and supplying them.

The terrorists themselves, and the propaganda they were externally directing towards the World's media, were totally anti the Protected Village concept. In their press statements they dwelt strongly on the horrors and discomforts of people being uprooted from their tribal hearths, rather than on the horrific numbers of them being slaughtered and maimed by the terrorists during the course of their programmes of *educating and politicising the people.*

Each Protected Village was garrisoned by a contingent of about thirty armed men, commanded by a European member of the Department of Internal Affairs . . . the Department responsible for the civil administration of the country, which had a particular responsibility in the tribal areas.

The first Protected Village had just been brought into being in the Kandeya and we cast our eyes in that direction. Why not mount a mock attack on that? It seemed a very good idea and soon our operators were going abroad in the Kandeya openly boasting they were going to take out this first Protected Village.

The ZANLA sympathising villagers, into whose confidence they were slyly trying to edge, were quite delighted . . . for they knew it would not be long before they too were taken out of the mainstream in which the ZANLA fish had been swimming so comfortably . . . and re-settled in Protected Villages.

'Ah,' they said admiringly, 'these new comrades are very brave . . .'

A local headman of substance was ordered to guide our men and a night reconnaissance of the target was conducted.

Two nights afterwards 2-Troop mounted their mock attack, directing a few ragged volleys of automatic fire into the air, well above the protective earthen ramparts surrounding the village, and two sixty millimetre mortar bombs fired so they fell well to the flank of the village, where it was impossible to do any harm.

Unfortunately for the Selous Scouts, the return fire from the Internal Affairs' guards was much more accurate than had been bargained for, and when they retired . . . and very briskly too . . . it was in some disorder.

In spite of this though, the exercise worked, and 2-Troop immediately gained the acceptance they had been seeking, even though every terrorist group for miles around claimed the credit.

Regrettably, and to our subsequent chagrin, it also had the effect of shaming the real ZANLA terrorists based locally into action, and for the next few weeks, until they tired of it, the nights in the Kandeya sounded like the Somme Battle of 1916, as the Protected Village was mortared and shot at by the terrorists.

It got so bad that at one stage, I was even approached by the local Army Commander and asked if the Scouts could do something to help. I felt quite guilty while promising to give the matter some serious thought . . . which was the only thing more I could do!

In spite of the problems we brought to the Internal Affairs in Kandeya on that occasion, they gained much more on the roundabouts than they had lost on the swings, for our new-found credibility enabled us to bring in Fireforces again and again onto targets in Kandeya, and they scythed big gaps in the ZANLA terrorists' ranks.

PART 4

The Calm Before the Storm
1975

Caponda: Cross Border Raid: March, 1975

During March, information was to hand that an important staging post for ZANLA terrorists, being used extensively while en route to infiltrate Rhodesia, had been established nearby the Caponda village some fifty five kilometres north . . . as the crow flies . . . from the Rhodesian border, on the main Mague to Mkumbura road.

I asked for permission to send a troop across country, by foot, to mount an attack, which after a lot of hesitation by those responsible, I was given.

The usual stringent conditions of absolutely no air-support at all, except for very serious casualty evacuation, was laid down, and the attack itself had to be carried out in such a manner that no finger could be pointed at the Rhodesians which could categorically blame us as the perpetrators.

The main tactical problem was that the area between our border and the target was unpopulated . . . because no water could be found in the area, so everything . . . not only ammunition, but food and water as well . . . had to be carried in by the attack force. What was more, the route lay across the floor of the Zambezi River valley which was incredibly hot, being situated at a very low altitude.

It was a difficult job indeed, because of the limitations laid upon us, but we either had to accept them or not mount the attack . . . and mount the attack we most definitely wanted to do.

The small task-force of twenty men crossed the Rhodesian border north of the mine-field and travelled most of the night and the following morning, stopping to shelter from the intense heat from 11h30 to 15h00, when the march was again resumed.

The heat was tremendous . . . and . . . as we had worriedly anticipated, water became a very critical issue.

By 03h30 the following morning, the attacking force reached a river on the outskirts of Caponda where they hoped to replenish their waterbottles, only to find it bone dry.

A reconnaissance team was sent to the village's outskirts and they soon returned with a detailed lay-out of the terrorist base . . . but they hadn't seen anyone.

At first light the Selous Scouts were in position to mount their attack, but an uncanny air of lifelessness around the area made them hesitate . . . some of the men went cautiously closer to carry out a further inspection . . . and . . . as the light grew stronger, they saw the place was totally deserted.

The patrol checked out the base and soon found the reason, which was evident by the number of fresh graves and the presence of some unburied fly-blown bodies . . . cholera had broken out and the terrorists had fled the place.

The attack force was now in a difficult position indeed . . . they couldn't use the well inside the base for fear of contracting cholera. The river was dry too.

The obvious thing was for an aircraft to be sent in to parachute water to them . . . except those running the course of the war from the Rhodesian side had decreed . . . under no circumstances would an aircraft be allowed to overfly Mozambique.

The Scouts walked up-river until they found a suitable place to dig in the sandy bed. Deep down, after a lot of very laborious work, they finally reached water . . . a small quantity, sufficient only to give each man a drink and fill his water bottle . . . it was certainly insufficient to last them for the walk home through the terrible heat they were experiencing.

The position was radioed to me and I immediately asked Army Headquarters to get an aircraft

over Caponda . . . in spite of the limitations we had been given . . . to drop some water to the men on the ground, but my request was refused.

I passed the message back to them . . . the men collectively shrugged their shoulders and set off to trudge back to Rhodesia and to do the best they could . . . while I retained constant and worried radio communication with them.

It was a tortuous walk back indeed and the men, experiencing extreme difficulty in view of the sweltering heat, found it difficult to keep moving and each of them conscious of this . . . held on to the last of their meagre rations of water, just in case.

I made a further desperate appeal to Army Headquarters for the standby helicopter to be sent into Mozambique . . . it could skim in at tree-top level with plastic waterbags . . . but again my request was turned down.

One man went down with dehydration . . . two more were about to follow suit.

I got in my car and drove to Army Headquarters to see General Walls personally, but he too was adamant . . . no air support whatsoever . . . sorry, but there it was.

I told him that if we didn't get water dropped to the men, he was going to lose some of them.

Eventually, after a lot of argument, he finally agreed to just one helicopter trip being made . . . and that trip saved the day . . . to say nothing of the lives of my men.

Nevertheless, understandably too, it was a very dissatisfied and angry patrol of Selous Scouts who finally crossed the border back into Rhodesia four days afterwards.

Recruiting, selection and training

The Selous Scouts, because of the secrecy surrounding the Regiment, never recruited Africans through the Army recruiting officer and neither did they advertise.

When recruits were required a whole troop and their officers would go to an area which was not a traditional recruiting area . . . most Army and Police recruits coming from the Charter or Victoria areas. Once in an area, the troop officer would send any of his men who were local to it out to their homes and meanwhile make arrangements to see any potential recruits they might find, at the local District Commissioner's office.

The non-commissioned officers and soldiers doing the recruiting, would rarely admit they were soldiers or that they had ever been in the Army. Various cover stories would be used . . . that they were tired and had left their job . . . they were looking for work, and so on.

They would then let it be known around their home area that they had heard talk that an Army officer from a very specialist tracker unit was gong to be at the District Commissioner's office on a particular day. They would also say they'd heard he was looking for only a very few men . . . and they had to be tough . . . and good trackers . . . very special men.

They would mention they'd heard that in this Unit there was going to be promotion and . . . extra money too for those who were selected . . . much more money than a normal soldier would get. At about this stage, he would usually announce, that he was going to try to join the unit . . . if they would have him . . . and suggest to his friends and acquaintances that they come along too to see what it was all about.

If things went well the troop officer would arrive at the District Commissioner's office to find maybe ten or twelve potential recruits awaiting him. To maintain the cover of his recruiters he would interview them as well as the true recruits.

As far as the people in the area were concerned, all recruits were merely being inducted into the Army . . . the Selous Scouts were never, at any time, mentioned by name.

Once accepted, the men would be taken back to Inkomo Barracks and kept available and on hand until enough suitable recruits had been brought in to make up a training course, which consisted of approximately sixty men.

At this stage the new recruits were not Selous Scouts . . . they were merely Army recruits . . . they wore no other uniform than camouflage denims.

The training course they were put through was the same tough basic training course any recruit into a good regiment might expect to go through . . . except maybe it was a little bit

tougher. A recruit into the Rhodesian African Rifles, for instance, stayed a recruit for only four months before being passed out to an operational unit . . . but our potential African Selous Scouts, went through the mill of a full grinding six months of training.

There was nothing mysterious about this training . . . footdrill . . . arms drill . . . physical training . . . musketry, and lots of it . . . and so on.

At the end of the six months basic training course, some forty or so men would be left, the other twenty or thereabouts having been discharged from the Army as unsuitable material.

As an African recruit squad neared the end of their basic training, all units of the Security Forces would be circulated to advise that a Selous Scouts' selection course was scheduled for a particular time and that Europeans of all ranks and Africans of non-commissioned officer rank, were called for.

Due to our never endingly rapid expansion, it was still vital for us to call for experienced non-commissioned officer volunteers from the Rhodesian African Rifles . . . for we were never able to saturate our needs, and raw African soldiers needed well-salted African leaders to guide them, before they themselves could become leaders.

When the time came to collate applications, it was normal to find applications from perhaps fifteen lance corporals and corporals . . . rarely from anyone ranking higher . . . from the Rhodesian African Rifles . . . and . . . several hundred applications from European members of the Security Forces, including National Service Policemen, Internal Affairs' vedettes, Guard Force, the many battalions of the Rhodesia Rifles, the Special Air Service and the Rhodesian Light Infantry.

Ninety out of each hundred would be from the Territorial Army, or from men performing National Service, while the remaining small minority would be regulars from the Rhodesian Light Infantry, the Special Air Service, or other regular units.

It might well be wondered why there were so few volunteers, either black or white, from the regular regiments. The answer to that was simple, the Selous Scouts' selection course was renowned as a real tough course . . . and . . . few regulars of any army relish the idea of starting at zero in a new regiment . . . particularly when it involves a fresh course of basic training.

On the day nominated for the volunteers to assemble, everyone, both black and white, officer, non-commissioned officer or soldier, would parade at Inkomo Barracks, the Europeans joining with the forty African soldiers . . . the selection course being timed so that they had just completed their basic training course.

Everyone had been ordered to bring their full kit . . . but . . . nothing had been mentioned about rations.

All necessary documentation would then take place and afterwards I would address them.

The address would be brief . . . I would merely tell them we were looking for a particular type of man . . . not a superman . . . just a good soldier who could perform a little above the ordinary.

I would stress that any volunteer could drop out of the course at any stage and no one was going to sneer at them for failing. Failure to gain entry into the Scouts certainly did not mean they were washouts as soldiers . . . quite the contrary . . . in an environment more suitable to their particular temperaments, they would make outstanding soldiers . . . as many of the volunteer officers, non-commissioned officers or rankers already were, or would later become.

Finally, I would express the gratitude of the Regiment to them for volunteering, pointing out that as the Regiment comprised volunteers, we would not exist if people such as they did not come forward.

I always went out of my way to make these points as strongly as I could, for no man likes to think of himself as a failure in any circumstances. To make this clear, I would say as a parting shot, that if anyone afterwards took them to task for failing the selection course when they got back to their Units – they should look them in the eye and say: 'At least I had the guts to try the course . . . why haven't you?'

The volunteers would then be issued with a one-day ration pack . . . a *rat-pack* as it was known

. . . and warned, that while the course was on, food issues might well be unpredictable . . . and . . . that the *rat-pack* might have to last them some considerable time.

A deliberate air of inefficiency was maintained after this stage and everyone was kept hanging around Inkomo Barracks . . . for most of the day . . . no further attempts were made to offer the volunteers a meal . . . or any more rations.

During the late afternoon an air of military efficiency would unexpectedly snap back into place and everyone would be ordered to immediately embus into waiting lorries together with all their kit and equipment . . . plus a suitcase or two of civilian clothing . . . in the case of the hopefuls who, knowing the Selous Scouts' training camp was nearby Kariba, hoped to slip away for some roulette in the casino . . . or . . . maybe a few cold beers in the pub . . . there was bound to be a night off sometime . . . and the transport would set off.

The men on the selection course would now be accompanied by an officer and seven non-commissioned officers from the particular Selous Scout troop whose rotating turn to be training troop had come about. Four would be African and four would be European and every volunteer, be he officer, non-commissioned officer or other rank fell under them for orders, irrespective of their ranks. They learned suddenly that during selection, ranks were ignored . . . although commissioned officers, both regular Army and Territorial Army and regular Army non-commissioned officers retained their substantive ranks . . . but Territorial Army non-commissioned officers dropped rank back to trooper.

The long drive to the Zambezi valley would commence with all the volunteers apprehensively sizing each other up . . . each wondering what the future held in store.

Just before night fell . . . a deliberate timing . . . the lorries would come to a halt at the turn-off to Charara, five kilometres from the Kariba airport on the Makuti to Kariba road, and everyone would be ordered to debus together with everything they had brought with them . . . and they would be fallen in. The Training Officer would address them.

'The Selous Scout training camp is just down the road at Charara . . . a mere twenty three kilometres away . . . and . . . every man here is expected to run the rest of the way.'

He would tell them that he and his non-commissioned officers would be awaiting their arrival at the training camp with considerable expectation and interest.

'Naturally,' he would say, 'everyone must carry everything they have brought with them . . . suitcases . . . everything . . . and if anyone drops anything along the route, I suggest he considers it abandoned . . . because no one will be back to pick it up.'

The Training Staff would then climb aboard the trucks . . . leaving two of their number to chase up any laggards . . . and head for Charara and the nice meal and deliciously cold refrigerated drinks which would be awaiting them.

The selection course for the Selous Scouts had been tough from inception, but by this time it had developed into an even tougher course. But, it was not tough for toughness sake . . . it was designed for a particular purpose . . . to find that good soldier who could perform a little above the ordinary . . . as I had told the volunteers on my address to them.

A Special Force soldier has to be a certain very special type of man. In his profile it is necessary to look for intelligence, fortitude or guts potential, loyalty, dedication, a deep sense of professionalism, maturity . . . the ideal age being twenty-four to thirty-two years, responsibility and self-discipline.

The Special Air Service looked for a loner . . . someone who does not become infected by the group mentality.

A lot of soldiers perform exceptionally well so long as they are in company with their comrades – they seem to draw strength from the others and feel they cannot let them down.

The *group syndrome*, if we can call it that, also enables a man to escape from that terrible feeling of loneliness which can so easily turn into a desire to give up or surrender. This is magnified in a position of danger, particularly if that man realises it is only his own efforts alone which will save the day . . . even his very life.

Consequently, it follows that a man who can function efficiently only as a member of a group

is discarded as Special Force material . . . no matter how fine a fighting soldier he might be.

The Special Air Service selection course is specifically designed to see if a man can function well in conditions of stress, if he can make correct assessments, arrive at correct decisions and . . . above all . . . be capable of satisfactorily completing his mission . . . all while he is on his own. Where the Special Air Service course fell down, in my opinion, was that the individuals on selection courses often had long periods when they were not under observation and this was a serious error.

Hitch-hiking lifts from cars, African buses and even push bikes became the accepted thing if a man could get away with it, and a lot of men who should have failed the course made it because of that. While this might indicate initiative in certain circumstances . . . it doesn't if it becomes the accepted thing.

When I had sat down to work out the Selous Scouts' selection course I found I was posed with an interesting problem. Because the bulk of Selous Scouts' work was to involve posing as terrorists within groups of men, I could not go for the loners . . . it was vital I had men who were compatible with each other. Against that, because of the nature of the task, there would also be regular occasions when the same men would be operating by themselves or in small two or three-man groups in situations involving high risks and extreme danger.

So, in my particular Special Force soldier profile, I needed the more difficult to find blend of gregariousness and solitariness.

It was for the purpose of finding this very unusual breed of man that our selection course was totally aimed . . . and here is how we achieved it.

Our volunteer, when we left him, was busily engaged in making the fastest time he possibly could . . . carrying everything he had brought with him, from where he had been dropped off at the Charara turn-off . . . along the twenty three kilometres which led to the Training Camp.

The camp, with its Zambezi Valley countryside, and spectacular views looking out over the waters of Kariba Lake, was situated in one of the last of nature's strongholds of African wild life . . . and all big game species from elephants, to lion, to buffalo, abounded in the immediate vicinity. It was also the most unlikely *training barracks* that any modern-day soldier has reported to for training.

Wafa wafa wasara wasara was how the Shona had well-named it.

The elite fifteen percent of candidates who passed selection there, earning the honour of wearing the distinctive brown beret with its silver badge of the osprey eagle dropping for a kill, and the many more who failed selection, will equally remember it as a purgatory on earth.

Wafa Wafa as the training school became generally known, means in Shona, *I am dead . . . I am dead . . .* which, on its own, is enough to make any trained soldier anywhere view the place with a jaundiced eye and feelings of suspicion and dread . . . but . . . when this term is combined with the Shona *wasara wasara* . . . which might best be described as the panic-stricken shouts one would expect from the inhabitants of a tribal village, when a pride of hungry lions appears unexpectedly in the centre of it . . . then he would know indeed that he was letting himself in for something pretty rugged and tough, once he set his foot on the road to becoming a Selous Scout.

When the volunteers . . . excepting those who had given up and dropped out of the course en route to the camp . . . arrived, they found no barrack or tented accommodation awaiting them. Only an area of bush featuring a few rude grass *bashas* . . . nothing else at all . . . which was indicated to them by the instructors as the accommodation area. Adjacent to it was another patch of ground where the grass had been trampled down, in the centre of which were three soot-stained stones and some blackened embers . . . which was the cook-house . . . but they would be issued with no food to cook and eat that night. They would merely be left to their own devices.

Tired, hungry and despondent after their unexpected slog through the humid night heat of the Zambezi Valley, it was normal, at this moment of truth, as they looked around them, for several more volunteers . . . additional to those who had given up on the run . . . to throw in the towel.

One Cockney Londoner . . . a former Royal Marine . . . once summed it up very succinctly.

'Cor,' he said in awe as the elephants trumpeted and crashed through the bush nearby the camp, 'it's like Whipsnade Zoo . . . wiv'out the bars!'

From here on in the aspiring Selous Scout's feet . . . as is said in Army parlance . . . rarely touched the ground.

We set out to exhaust, starve, exasperate and antagonise him . . . if he didn't like it or couldn't take it, he could drop out at any stage. From our point of view, the important thing was that he was under constant and intense scrutiny the whole time . . . and . . . his performance and behaviour pattern was carefully watched and noted.

When a man is exhausted and when he is starved he gets beyond play-acting and his true colours are soon revealed. We quickly got him into this situation in the first place by starting him off with the unexpected road-run to the Kariba training camp. But, thereafter to keep him there and lower his resistance still more, he was hassled, starved and chased so that he had virtually no time to himself.

The programme for each of the next five days would commence with a road run or physical training at first light which would last until 07h00.

At 08h00 there would be a muster parade followed immediately afterwards by training periods at which all basic soldierly skills were sharpened up. This was particularly so with weapon-handling . . . and shooting . . . a large amount of shooting . . . two-eyed shooting . . . jungle range shooting and drake shooting.

Drake shooting was a very effective method used by the Rhodesian Army to deal with an encounter action or ambush in bush country, where the enemy had ample concealment and was difficult to locate.

Each man of a patrol concentrated on an arc to his immediate front and systematically analysed it.

'If I was an enemy, which position within my arc would I have chosen for cover?'

He would look at the base of large trees, rocks, thickets, and double tap two shots into each place. In the case of trees, he would be trained to fire right into them at almost ground level as bullets fired from modern high velocity weapons can easily completely penetrate a tree.

Areas were chosen at random by the instructors for these purposes and small targets concealed in all likely places an enemy would take cover in. After some practice and coaching it was really quite remarkable how many targets were actually hit without the firer having had the slightest sight of them.

Each day ended on the assault course, which was a particularly nasty one, most of it being high in the trees meaning there were some very dizzy heights to contend with.

As soon as it was dark, night training would commence. This would involve movement by night, compass work and night shooting . . . and . . . as soon as the basics had been polished sufficiently, tactical exercises too.

For the first five days of the course no food . . . no food at all . . . would be issued to any of the men on the course. They would have to subsist on one *rat-pack* . . . the one they had been issued with at Inkomo Barracks a life-time before . . . and . . . on what they could forage in the way of edible berries, wild spinach, edible roots and small game in the nature of birds or rodents which they could snare . . . in what little free time they could snatch during the constant chasings they were being subjected to.

On the third day of the course the instructors would shoot a baboon, which would be hung up in a tree in full view of the volunteers . . . it would not be skinned or gutted . . . and it would be left there to get foul and very high . . . which it very quickly did in the turgid heat of the Zambezi Valley.

Two days later, on the fifth day, it would be cut down, skinned, gutted and dropped into a large iron pot where it would be left to bubble merrily away while exuding a most disgusting odour.

Other chunks of game meat . . . which had likewise been left to rot until green were also hacked up and tossed into this abominable stew . . . maggots and all.

This was destined to be the volunteers' first real meal since the course had commenced and we never saw anyone turn away from it . . . its smell and general putridness notwithstanding.

People outside the Selous Scouts were aghast at what we were doing.

'You are taking things too far . . . '

But we were not . . . we were doing it for a very good and sensible reason. Few people are aware that rotten meat is edible, if thoroughly boiled . . . although if it is reheated afterwards a deadly botulism could kill you.

It is edible and nutritious on that first cooking, in spite of its being in the first stages of decay . . . because it is still protein . . . and . . . eating it can save a man's life in an emergency.

Scouts on a reconnaissance mission deep inside Mozambique or elsewhere, where re-supply might not always be possible, could survive on the rotting remainder of a buck carcass which had been killed by a lion . . . but they had to be made aware of this by practical experience . . . otherwise, they would never have eaten it.

Civilization over the centuries has coloured our senses . . . and dulled them too. The average person being fed such meat would uncontrollably retch and vomit it up. But by starving men and putting them under extreme pressure we created the desired psychological effect . . . and they found no difficulty whatsoever in eating it . . . they even came hungrily back for second helpings.

At about this period of the course, drop-outs were occurring thick and fast . . . we generally expected some forty or so men to drop out during the first two days of the course.

At all times, volunteers were kept totally in the dark as to what the syllabus of the course was or, even what the programme two hours ahead of them was to be.

And . . . that never-ending pressure was constantly applied by the instructors . . . so they never knew whether they were coming or going so, if they were prone to giving up . . . they would give up.

After the first five days and that first delightful taste of baboon stew, food of a type was issued in limited quantities, the volunteers still being encouraged to use their initiative and live off the bush . . . but shooting of game was strictly forbidden.

The last three days of the seventeen day selection course was the endurance march. All the men had by then spent fourteen days on a drastically reduced diet, coupled with intense physical and mental stress.

The length of the march chosen depended on the ruggedness of the terrain, but varied between ninety and a hundred kilometres. They would march some thirty kilometres a day, but it should be remembered that this distance was a map distance which took no account of the undulating country . . . the up-hills, the down-hills, the rivers and so on . . . all of which added to the distance the volunteers had to tramp.

For the march the volunteers were split into small groups, each accompanied by an instructor to note behaviour patterns the whole time.

Every marcher carried packs loaded with thirty kilograms of rocks . . . all of which were painted green . . . so a man could not discard them during the march and replace them with others towards the end.

The packs were carefully weighed too . . . prior to the commencement and once the march was completed . . . and each of those precious rocks would be examined to ensure non-painted ones hadn't been put in en route to replace the others.

Stones were purposely chosen because once again, psychologically, a man well knew he was carrying inanimate, useless articles, which did his morale considerable harm.

Other than his rocks, each man would carry his normal battle-scale of ammunition, so the total weight he was carrying would be in the region of thirty five to forty kilograms.

When one takes into account the ruggedness of the Zambezi escarpment area, and the tremendous heat which perpetually assails one in that area, the lack of water and the never-ending torturous discomfort from tsetse fly, one begins to get an idea of what a man undergoing selection to become a Selous Scout actually went through.

For the three day march each man was issued with rations consisting only of a 125 gram (4 ounce) tin of meat and 250 grams (½ lb) of mealie meal.

The last twelve kilometres of the course . . . although no man was told it was the last twelve kilometres . . . was a speed march. Each man's pack was taken from him and loaded into a vehicle, but he was then issued in lieu with a filled sandbag to lump along instead.

This last distance had to be completed within the set time of two and a half hours . . . which could only be achieved by running the whole distance.

I always made every effort to attend this last run-in . . . it was a sobering experience indeed to witness those men, most of them in the last stages of exhaustion.

At the end, many refused to believe that the course was over when the instructor suddenly stepped from the bushes and congratulated them.

'It's a trick . . . another of your damn tricks to make us give up!'

They would stand there swaying on their feet, swearing violently at the instructors . . . virtually all done in.

The looks on their faces when final realisation dawned that it was really all over, was very humbling to me and always made me resolve that men who were prepared to go through what I had put them through . . . and had then gone through it . . . deserved only the best when it came to leadership, training and planning for operations of war.

After three or four days . . . to allow their feet to recover because they were normally in a terrible condition . . . they would undergo a fourteen day tracking and bush-craft course.

Then, all the new Selous Scouts, except for the regulars, would leave.

The regulars would then be taken to a different camp to undergo what had become known as the *dark phase*. This camp was built and set out in the same manner as a typical terrorist training camp.

Among the instructors were a number of *tame* terrorists and the next ten to twelve days would be spent teaching the new Selous Scouts how to become fully fledged pseudo members of ZANLA or ZIPRA.

Corporal Hennie Steyn

Corporal Hennie Steyn, a member of my operations' room staff, had once been involved in a sad and unfortunate shooting accident in which he had lost his right arm. Tremendously proud but nevertheless very conscious of his disability, he sought no pity and was scathingly rude to those who ventured to help him. This was brought home to me to my cost one day when I found him battling to fasten a series of map sheets to the wall; the stapler held in his teeth and by one hand, while his head and a knee lent support to the map. Unthinkingly, I moved to help him, but all I got in appreciation for my good intentions, was a venomous and distinctly insubordinate snarl, so I smartly left the operations room on some clumsy pretext to avoid embarrassing us both. Nevertheless, I was thereafter very careful to leave him strictly alone when his one arm was in gear trying to perform a two-arm task.

Hennie, a former Special Air Service soldier, as perhaps might have been expected, missed the action and felt out of the swing of things. He made an unexpected request to be allowed to return to operations.

I looked at him steadily, my feelings immensely mixed.

'Look,' I breathed finally, trying to be tactful, 'you have to be sensible and face facts. I admire your spirit, but your request is impossible. Even if I wanted to let you go, I couldn't. Army Headquarters wouldn't tolerate the thought for one second. Then there is the not easily ignored question of your disability pension . . . if you were shot up again, you'd lose your pension . . . because you had not been passed fit for active service. Besides that, even should I be able to overcome those problems, I still wouldn't let you go. How could you look after yourself in action with only one arm? And, if you were killed . . . how could I face your parents? I can just imagine it . . . murderer, they'd call me, and they'd be right. No ways, Hennie, I wouldn't consider it. It's just one of those things, I'm afraid, you will just have to reconcile yourself to doing office work.'

He produced an AK sub-machinegun hidden under some maps and gave a stunning

exhibition of loading and unloading plus stoppage drills. He seemed quicker and more dexterous than a man with both hands.

He finished and looked up expectantly. 'My shooting is bloody good too, Sir . . . my false hand makes me steadier if anything.'

His display had been an eye opener, but I couldn't allow it to make any difference.

'The only man who could let you go on ops is General Walls and he won't. I can tell you that for fact.'

'Would you mind speaking to him, Sir?'

'Hennie,' I said irritably, 'I most certainly will not speak to General Walls. If I did, he would begin to believe I am not fit to command and do you know something . . . he would be absolutely right.'

On the 22nd April, I received an unexpected 'phone call from the General's secretary.

'There is a corporal with one arm standing in front of me requesting a personal interview with General Walls. General Walls sends his compliments and wishes to know what his request is all about.'

'My God,' I almost shouted down the phone, 'the bloody fool has really gone and done it.' I explained in a few terse phrases to the secretary what the story was. 'Tell the General *not* to see him,' I said finally. 'I've already fully explained to him why he cannot go on operations.'

Later that afternoon Hennie re-appeared at the Bindura Fort and sauntered into the operations room looking immensely pleased with himself.

'Good afternoon, Sir.'

I glared at him.

'I saw General Walls this morning, Sir.'

'So I gather,' I said tersely. I was not in a communicative mood.

'You were quite right, Sir, he was the only one who could give me permission. Would you like to know what he told me after I explained everything to him, Sir?'

'I can't wait to hear, Corporal,' I said icily.

'He said okay; Hennie, you can go back, but I'll lay down certain conditions with your boss. He then poured me some tea, gave it to me and said if he had more men like me, one arm and all, he'd win the bloody war in twenty four hours.'

Hennie smiled at me proudly. Like a lot of non-commissioned officers who knew their worth, he did not display any false modesty.

'He's right too you know, Sir, because I am a jacked soldier.'

I looked at Hennie wearing his false arm and couldn't find words to answer him; even had I found the words I still wouldn't have been able to . . . the lump stuck in my throat was too big.

Some time after this on the eastern border, a Fireforce of the Rhodesian Light Infantry were parachuted into a successful contact on the radio guidance of Hennie Steyn, whose pseudo group had set up some ZANLA terrorists for the last ever sucker-punch of their collective lives.

For some of the troopers, who were newly posted from recruit training, it was their first ever combat action, which was a landmark in any case in the still wide-eyed life of an eighteen year old soldier.

Hennie, leaving his pseudo operators in their bushy hide on a nearby kopje, strolled down to congratulate the Fireforce on their kills, his face bearded and stained black, his nondescript overalls tattered, but obviously comfortable, and his Russian AK sub-machinegun dead-locked in the steely vice of his artificial hand.

The astonishment and awe mirrored on the faces of the young troopers was, I believe, a picture indeed. Quite naturally, on hearing he was a Selous Scout, they accepted without question the evidence of their eyes which confirmed the abounding rumours, and assumed the seemingly ferocious, but filthy one-armed man, protected by a repelling body odour as thick as a flak jacket, perpetually roamed the bush in solitary magnificence, living on berries and biltong while glued to the trail of terrorists with the tenacity of a shadow.

It is of such misunderstandings that folk tales are made.

Tame Terrorist Turns Traitor: April, 1975

Sergeant Major Charlie Krause came up unexpectedly on the radio during the evening of the 25th April.

'I'm worried,' he reported, 'I haven't heard from one of my callsigns for over twenty four hours.'

'Roger,' I acknowledged, 'if they don't come up by 06h00 hours to-morrow, I'll send a helicopter to you. Have a team standing by to look for tracks at their last given position and try to follow them up. Meanwhile, I'll get an aircraft up to circle their area and call to them . . . their transmitter could have gone on the blink, but they may still hear the aircraft's transmission and signal it manually from the ground.'

'Roger,' said Charlie and closed down for the night.

Failure to keep radio schedules happened fairly frequently and for many real and valid reasons not always due to problems, but in spite of that, we always treated each instance as a possible emergency.

Sometimes a callsign could be too engrossed or involved with the local population, or maybe with the terrorists, so it was impossible for them to use their radios. Then, like it or not, we would have to sit and sweat it out for twenty four hours, at which time, moves to locate them would swing into action, regardless of any possibilities of a compromise.

Callsigns came up twice a day normally on the regimental H.F. net and sub-callsigns in their turn came up either on the V.H.F. or sometimes on their H.F. sets . . . depending on the areas and distances involved . . . to their callsign commanders. Selous Scout forts, as well as the Inkomo operations room, kept a constant twenty four hour listening watch, so if a callsign got into sudden difficulty the men had the guaranteed comfort that at least six stations, somewhere in Rhodesia, were listening out for them.

At long last the operations' room clock showed that the required grace period of twenty four hours had passed by . . . each hour had seemed like two to me . . . and at 06h00 a helicopter picked up Charlie Krause and a small team and dropped them off at the last known location of his missing callsign.

Charlie, an experienced and able tracker, immediately picked up their trail and set off. We heard nothing more until late that afternoon when a tense message crackled through . . . he had found them . . . seven were dead and two were missing . . . both of the missing were *tame* terrorists.

The thought which had been at the back of all our minds suddenly came to the forefront . . . that nagging worry that constantly plagues all pseudo operators . . . had the *tame* terrorists turned again . . . this time against us?

One of our Special Branch officers left to investigate, taking with him a Rhodesian Light Infantry team to assist in the recovery of the bodies. The cover story was that we had killed seven terrorists in a contact.

Sergeant Major Charlie Krause, visibly upset, took the Special Branch officer to the scene where the incident had taken place, leaving the recovery party from the Rhodesian Light Infantry at the landing zone.

It appeared each of the men had been shot four or five times while they were sleeping. The Group Commander had not died instantly in the first onslaught of bullets, for he was found gripping the radio handset, obviously trying to call for help when he too was cut down.

The tracks giving the flight pattern of the two missing *tame* terrorists were interesting, because they did not conform to each other. One seemed to have taken off straight from his blankets and headed inland. The other set of tracks gave every indication that the owner had been on sentry duty when the shooting commenced and his spoor led off towards the Mozambique border, only some ten kilometres away to the east.

Those heading inland were of a man in full flight, while the other set which headed towards Mozambique, were those of a man walking quickly.

The solution was crystal clear whether we liked it or not . . . our ever constant nightmare had

turned into reality . . . the *tame* terrorists had turned into traitors. But, why had they fled in opposite directions? We did not have to wait long for the answer which came shortly afterwards from the Police at Mkumbura who reported that a terrorist had surrendered to them and wanted to contact us.

He was the one who had taken the inland route.

Later, after interrogating him, a clear picture of the tragic events emerged. His story too bore the hallmark of truth. The first inkling he'd had of trouble, he said, was when firing broke out and he was wounded in the hand. With survival instincts honed to a fine edge by the years he had spent in the bush being hunted like an animal by the Security Forces, he leapt from his blankets and sped off into the night.

The killer, as the evidence had indicated, was the *tame* terrorist who'd been on sentry duty and the reason he'd managed to kill all seven with such experienced ease was not difficult to see. Pseudo operators, for obvious reasons of necessity, had to copy every detail of the terrorist's methods of doing things, even if, as so often happened, it conflicted with established military teaching or even with plain common sense.

The Rhodesian Security Forces always based up at night in a circle with a reasonable distance between each man in case of an attack. But the terrorists, on the other hand, slept almost touching each other in a straight line, head to toe. In thick bush, provided no one saw them base up, the method had some merit. It made for good control and enabled every man to be easily alerted when danger loomed. What's more, in the instance of a surprise attack, every man could sit up so fire could be directed to front and rear simultaneously. But, on the other hand, if an attacker caught sight of one of them lying down, it was simplicity itself to wipe out the whole group, as he could accurately assess from one where everyone else was likely to be. Unhappily, the traitor on sentry duty was also in the same position and he'd been able to wipe out his erstwhile friends and comrades with a few short bursts.

The empty cartridge cases littering the scene provided the final conclusive proof when ballistically checked by comparison microscope at the Police Armaments Branch . . . they had been fired from the AK rifle issued to the missing man.

The Selous Scouts used captured weapons during many of their operations, and this made the Regiment vulnerable to criticism. Consequently all weapons were test-fired before re-issue after original capture and sample cartridge cases retained for record purposes.

After this terrible incident, I anxiously awaited reaction from the men and I spent a great deal of time flying the rounds from fort to fort, addressing the men *en masse* and individually, and explaining what had happened.

The reaction was mixed as perhaps I expected. Some advocated abolishing the *tame* terrorist concept immediately and continuing only with soldiers, their reasoning was that we had gained enough experience to carry on on our own. I did not accept this as valid and constantly reminded them that in counter-insurgency the scene shifted and changed almost from day to day, the advantage often only narrowly being retained by us for most of the time. But, I warned, there had been many the time when the advantages had clearly swung into the terrorists' favour and for a time, until we had frantically altered our tactics, we had become impotent.

From my own point of view I was convinced the *tame* terrorist concept was vital . . . even irreplaceable. It was only they who kept us abreast of the rapidly changing *modus operandi* of ZANLA and ZIPRA.

The vast majority of the Scouts, I was relieved to find, shared my view that the whole unfortunate incident was merely an inherent risk factor in our type of work. And all we could do to prevent a recurrence was to ensure that the captured terrorists we used had well and truly changed sides before being sent out with troops in the field.

There were no new safety factors we could introduce . . . there was no magic formula . . . we were in a game where the only thing we could rely on was our instincts . . . our basic animal instincts . . . our gut feelings. Our operators could do nothing else but continue in their vulnerability . . . they could not shackle men up or order the *tame* terrorists not to take their stint

of night sentry duty, for this would have imperilled our men even more and shattered the only substantial and real corner stone they had to hold onto . . . the corner stone of trust.

Cordon Sanitaire

At this stage of the war, it belatedly dawned on the military hierarchy controlling our destinies and directing the prosecution of the war, that if FRELIMO gave unstinting help to ZANLA, we were going to be sorely pressed to provide sufficient troops to counter the increased levels of terrorist incursions.

Amongst the many schemes thought up to counter this threat were numerous mad-hat ones. I found it astonishing, as a career soldier, to see how many senior members of our services . . . supposedly well educated and experienced from a military point of view . . . broke with sound military tenets and principles. Often, the sheer futility of many of the suggested schemes was so transparently obvious that one was led into believing they'd either forgotten everything they'd been taught, or their actions were born of desperation, brought on by not being able to think of an alternative.

The mine belt fiasco was a prime example.

This project, which was finally to prove totally useless and, what's more, cost an astronomical sum, was embarked upon without delay. It was a crib from the Israelis and the general idea was for a huge mine belt to be laid and buckled tight around our hostile borders, fitted where practicable with elements of an early warning system designed to detect and warn of any attempted or actual breachings.

Now obstacles, natural or artificial, are factors which any military man must account for in his planning during time of war. But a principle he must always keep in mind is that an obstacle is not an obstacle if it is not under constant observation and covered by firepower. Bearing this in mind, it obviously must be futile to even contemplate mine belts if one does not possess the means and ability to keep the complete mine belt under continuous surveillance. Otherwise it would only delay someone wishing to cross the minefield by a mere three hours, which was the approximate time it took an engineer to make a breach.

Later, after the failure of the mine belt became apparent to all, the original folly was compounded by adding claymore anti-personnel mines to the seeds of destruction already sewn. Now, a claymore must, of necessity, be set above the ground and triggered by a trip wire. Although perhaps effective at night, during daylight it was totally ineffective, particularly in the African bush where everybody always seems to have their eyes and ears open, for it was simple to detect and disarm, particularly when the early morning dew glistened brightly on the trip-wire.

What the experts had overlooked was that, unlike Israel, we had a vast frontier to watch and protect and only very few soldiers to do the job.

While it may be true the mine belt did, in the initial stages, cause a large number of casualties, these were, in any case, considered expendable by the enemy high commands and of no real consequence.

In ZANLA thinking certainly, having been instructed in their war skills by the Red Chinese, personnel were strictly expendable.

As the war progressed, the terrorists became more adept in negotiating passages through the mine belt; their main tool to effect this, surprisingly enough, was an ordinary shovel. Then we began to become painfully aware the mine belt had provided the terrorists with an unexpected bonus . . . an inexhaustible arsenal of explosives. It became commonplace for claymore mines to be uplifted from the belt and used against us as boosters to Russian mines placed in the roads or used in ambushes against us or as booby traps in camps that had been vacated.

To us, particularly, the mine belt was a major irritation, because we were no longer able to cross hostile borders at will and the requirement for engineers to breach it, meant a larger number of people becoming aware of our activities, to the detriment of security.

Capture of Contactman in Mozambique: May, 1975

A small patrol was tasked to cross into Mozambique to capture a FRELIMO commander, so Special Branch could clarify the obviously new relationship between ZANLA and FRELIMO. In particular, they were anxious to learn what plans were afoot regarding assistance to the ZANLA setup by FRELIMO.

For three days during May, some Selous Scouts mounted observation on that section of the mine belt they intended to breach, to check for enemy activity on the other side. When they were satisfied it was safe, the Engineers were sent for to clear a passage through. After they had withdrawn, observations were continued for another day to ensure FRELIMO and ZANLA had not noticed the nefarious activities of our Engineers. Apparently they had not, for no one appeared on the far side to investigate.

The next night, a patrol commanded by Sergeant Bruce Fitzsimmons, and including Lance Corporal Burundu, made their way stealthily to the minefield, then moved along it for a considerable distance, until they found two sandbags marking the entry point into the breach.

Cleared passages through minebelts are normally marked with white tapes or even with one-way lighting, but this could hardly be done for a clandestine crossing. This time they only had the sandbags and a wire on each side of the safe passage, which had to be found then followed by feel.

Sergeant Bruce Fitzsimmons and another man moved carefully through the breach, while the rest covered them. Once through, Bruce stayed at the exit point, while his companion took up a defensive position.

The remainder of the patrol then commenced moving through the breach to join them.

A sickeningly loud explosion erupted in a fountain of earth amongst them, temporarily blinding those nearest it and showering all of them with debris.

For Bruce the next few minutes were an eternity, while he peered through a night lit only by a feeble moon, appearing fitfully through the clouds, to determine if a grenade had been tossed at them or if someone had stepped on and detonated a mine.

When nothing further happened, he braced himself and moved slowly back through the breach until he found Lance Corporal Burundu crumpled semi-conscious on the ground. The lower portion of his right foot was missing . . . blown off by an anti-personnel mine.

It did not need spelling out . . . the passage through the minefield had not been properly cleared by the Engineers . . . at any moment another mine could go off. He was in the invidious position of having some members of his patrol at the exit point, while five more were isolated in the centre of the passage, frozen into immobility for fear of setting off another mine.

Using his bushknife as a probe, he began testing and clearing the ground in the immediate vicinity of the men in the breach. Then, after first aid had been administered to Lance Corporal Burundu, the whole patrol gradually moved back one step at a time into Rhodesia, literally stepping in Bruce's footsteps.

Lance Corporal Burundu was casevaced to hospital where his right leg was amputated.

An investigation at the site the next day, indicated the patrol had entered an old breach, the sandbags of which had not been removed. It was a hundred metres away from the one they should have used.

Unfortunately, the sustaining of casualties did not stop the war, so two days later another breach was made in the minefield and a patrol crossed safely into Mozambique. This time the mission was totally successful and not only did they bring back a FRELIMO prisoner, unfortunately not a man of command rank, but also a ZANLA contactman who was living in Mozambique and who had the total responsibility for the movement of terrorists into Rhodesia in the area to the west of Mkumbura.

His position involved regular and frequent liaison with the FRELIMO commander at Mkumbura, so he was in a position where he knew of virtually everything that was going on.

We established from him that FRELIMO had every intention of supporting ZANLA to the hilt; the only condition stipulated was that ZANLA bases should not be established too close to

FRELIMO garrisons in case of attack by the Rhodesian Security Forces. The intelligence we gained from this contactman proved invaluable and included precise details of the location of ZANLA camps, their infiltration routes and staging posts used after exiting from or before entering Rhodesia.

I visited Lance Corporal Burundu at the Bindura Fort hospital, where he was recuperating after his amputation. Then, as always, I suffered from a peculiar disability, where I found great difficulty in finding the right words to express myself to a man who had suffered brutal maiming as a direct result of faithfully carrying out my orders. Platitudes were not enough . . . I couldn't bring myself to use them anyway. I felt a deep sense of responsibility for his terrible situation . . . even a little guilty . . . that it was not my body which had been torn.

I sat awkwardly by his bed-side and had a one-way conversation with him regarding his future in the Army. I was particularly anxious to reassure him in case he was thinking he would be discharged on account of his disability. I made it clear he would only be medically discharged if he particularly wished it. I then outlined the many avenues still open to disabled men in the clerical, pay and quartermaster branches, and I told him I would ensure he was sent on as many courses as was necessary to ensure his moves up the promotion ladder went ahead without impediment.

It was, I knew, a very one-sided conversation . . . I did all the talking . . . he answered only in monosyllables. I did not worry too much about this, as I naturally assumed he was depressed because of the amputation. Nevertheless, I felt satisfied at the end of our conversation, such as it was, that I had achieved something . . . I knew he would feel better once he had thought things over and digested everything I had said to him.

The following day the African Regimental Sergeant Major marched into my office, stumped to a halt in front of me and saluted. I looked at him quizzically.

'I visited Lance Corporal Burundu yesterday, *Ishe.*'

'Good,' I said, ' I saw him too . . . did he mention it?'

'Yes, *Ishe*, but I am afraid he is very angry with you. This is why I have come to see you, *Ishe.*'

'Angry with me?' I exclaimed totally bemused. 'What did I do to upset him?'

'*Ishe*, he is very upset that you insulted him by ordering him to become a *jam stealer* (Rhodesian army slang for a member of the Service Corps). He said he had heard they can make artificial legs which work just like the real ones. He asked me why you will not get him one so he can get back on operations. And . . . that he is one of your best soldiers and you know it . . . and . . . he has done many good things for you . . . he cannot understand why you now want him to steal jam!'

On my next visit to Army Headquarters, I made a specific point of talking to General Walls about Lance Corporal Burundu. I reminded him of Hennie Steyn, who was already back on operations.

General Walls, to his everlasting credit, didn't hesitate. 'Okay, Ron,' he said with a grin, 'but my God, much more of this and the terrorists will think we are down to our last manpower reserves!'

When I broke the news to Lance Corporal Burundu, his face broke into a huge smile and he immediately inquired when he could expect to be issued with his new leg.

I had recommended he be awarded the Bronze Cross of Rhodesia, prior to his accident, for the exceptionally fine work he had carried out in a series of operations during the preceding twelve months. While his citation was being processed through the usual long and lengthy channels at Army Headquarters, he waited impatiently for his new leg to arrive, which it finally did in October. Shortly afterwards I was able to break the news to him that he had been awarded not the Bronze Cross which I had recommended, but the Silver Cross . . . the second highest award for gallantry in the Rhodesian Army.

Prior to the rehearsal for the Medals' Parade, I told the Adjutant to ensure a wheel chair was available for Lance Corporal Burundu, as he had not had his leg sufficiently long enough to enable him to go through the longish ceremony without experiencing considerable discomfort.

On the first rehearsal parade, I noticed Lance Corporal Burundu was not using a wheel chair as

I had instructed. I immediately summoned the African Regimental Sergeant Major and demanded to know what was going on.

'*Ishe*,' he grinned, 'you've made him angry again. He insists he is once more a fighting soldier . . . not a *jam stealer* . . . and he intends to get his medal in the same manner as he earned it . . . standing on his feet.'

Needless to say, this was precisely the way he received his Silver Cross from the President of Rhodesia.

Later, after he'd mastered his new leg, he returned to operations, but we were careful that those he took part in were unlikely to involve too much walking.

In 1976 he was a member of a column which struck deep into Mozambique to destroy a terrorist base. In the process, complete with artificial leg, he won the Bronze Cross of Rhodesia for outstanding bravery in action, thereby becoming the most highly decorated non-commissioned officer in the Rhodesian Army.

He was joined in this honour a year later by his great friend and comrade in arms, Trooper Rangutu, who also became a joint holder of both the Silver and Bronze Crosses of Rhodesia.

Amongst the non-commissioned officers and soldiers of the Rhodesian Army, they established a record that was never to be surpassed.

Operation Newton: Kandeya Tribal Trust Lands: June, 1975

In April, 1975, Special Branch picked up information at the scene of a contact which indicated that a ZANLA terrorist meeting had taken place between the 22nd and 25th of March within the orbit of the village of a, at first unidentified, contactman in the Kandeya Tribal Trust Lands.

He was unidentified because his village had been variously code-named in the captured documents as *Vietnam* and also as *Veterinary Department*.

It was later confirmed that both these code-names referred to Mauswa village.

According to the captured documents a large number of ZANLA terrorists based in their Nehanda operational sector . . . part of our *Hurricane* operational area . . . had been at the meeting.

They comprised the Sectorial Operations Commander: Kenneth Mabunu, the Sectorial Political Commissar: Alex Taruvinga, the Sectorial Logistics Officer: Mabvongodze, the Sectorial Medical Officer: Paul Nanare, the Detachment Commander for the Madziwa Tribal Trust Lands: Akim Gadziwa, fifty rank and file trained terrorists and seventeen terrorist recruits.

On examining the implications of this information we immediately noticed that Ruwani School . . . indicated by Lieutenant Dale Collett as a target in May, 1974, when Fireforce bumped some fifty terrorists gathered at a meeting . . . was within a short distance of Mauswa village.

A pseudo group was sent into the Kandeya to see if there was any information which might indicate if any more large meetings of terrorists for the Nehanda Sector were scheduled.

They didn't discover anything positive but they did confirm part of what we already suspected . . . that the terrorists in each sector did hold fairly regular meetings of all officers and rank and file to discuss tactics and strategy, and to pass on new orders received from the Military High Command in Mozambique.

The problem was the prediction of the next venue . . . and also the date.

Generally, but it was a very wide generally, we had an idea of the area where the next meeting would be . . . it would be somewhere within reach . . . or within the orbit as we said . . . of Mauswa village where the contactman responsible for making the meeting arrangements lived.

It seemed strange . . . even a little incredible . . . to accept at first, that the Nehanda Sector terrorists would still be using the same general area for their Sectorial meetings . . . after the mauling they had suffered at the hands of Fireforce in May, 1974. One would have expected them to have used some place miles away from the scene of that disaster.

It was only after Lieutenant Alan Lindner, the Regimental Intelligence Officer, had got down to analysing ZANLA's problems in detail that we realised that, in reality, the terrorists were prisoners of circumstance and had little choice.

The ZANLA terrorist organisation had undergone enormous recent expansion which they had achieved by conducting a highly successful recruiting campaign in the tribal trust lands, which had netted hundreds of recruits who had been clandestinely sent to Mozambique for general training . . . the better educated being routed on to Tanzania for a relatively more intensive and sophisticated instruction course.

The Tanzanian selections, relative to the overall numbers, had been very few. Those sent to Mozambique were sketchily trained . . . scarcely trained at all in fact . . . which meant that while numbers increased by leaps and bounds . . . the ZANLA operational standard – which had always been abysmally low . . . sank even lower.

So, increasing numbers of those barely trained terrorists were being infiltrated from Mozambique . . . and they had to come in and operate within rigid operational confines.

The main reason was the total absence of two-way radio systems in operation either at a high or at a low level . . . they had never had them and no efforts were ever made to introduce them.

This meant they had to rely entirely on couriers which meant a veritable snow-storm of letters and notes going back and forth.

When this is realised, it will be appreciated that once a network of routes into the country, rendezvous points and meeting places had been worked out and become customary, it was virtually impossible, in the long term, for changes to be made and, absolutely impossible for the arbitrary implementation of change.

The proximate result of a sudden change would have meant dozens of terrorist groups in the country losing contact . . . and, what was more important, they would have been powerless in their attempts to re-establish contact with ZANLA, except by returning to Mozambique.

Any other alternative would have involved the likelihood of them being shot as *Skuz'apo* – Selous Scouts.

Incoming groups too would have found themselves impotent and unable to establish that all-vital initial contact so they could become operational.

While this situation restricted the terrorists in their ability to choose venues for meetings, it did not mean they had to hold them at precisely the same village or immediate vicinity. On the contrary, their meeting places could be randomly changed by the contactman responsible for setting them up . . . but naturally, they had to be within a reasonable distance of his village – within his orbit in fact . . . which did not make the finding of that venue any easier.

The system used was that the various Nehanda Sector terrorist groups would gravitate towards the area of *Vietnam* – Mauswa village . . . a few days before a meeting was scheduled.

Contactmen and *Mujibas* would move from group to group authenticating credentials to ensure the Selous Scouts – *Sku'zapo* . . . had not appeared amidst their ranks.

All the time this was going on, the contactmen would gradually gyrate the groups towards the particular place chosen for that month's meeting, but for sensible security reasons, the actual spot would only be notified to the incoming terrorist groups at the last possible minute.

The burning question still remained . . . when were those meetings going to be held? At first glance it seemed impossible to find out.

Alan Lindner decided to apply the principle of pattern analysis to the problem, for no matter how randomly unpredictable a human being might try to be, he inevitably leaves a behavioural pattern behind him . . . sometimes as clear as the mucusy trail of a snail . . . which is open to intelligent interpretation.

It is for such reasons that millions have been spent on designing computers with the prime function of selecting random numbers . . . because the human, a creature of habit, is incapable of doing anything totally random.

To start with, Alan had two prime facts. There had been a meeting somewhere in the vicinity of Mauswa village over the period 22nd to 25th March and . . . there had been another in the same area in May, 1974, resulting in the Fireforce contact precipitated by Dale Collett's action.

He put them on a graph.

How about plotting terrorist activity? Alan reasoned. It would surely follow that after

meetings to discuss future actions, there would be an immediate upsurge in terrorist incidents which would then gradually tail off until the next briefing came due.

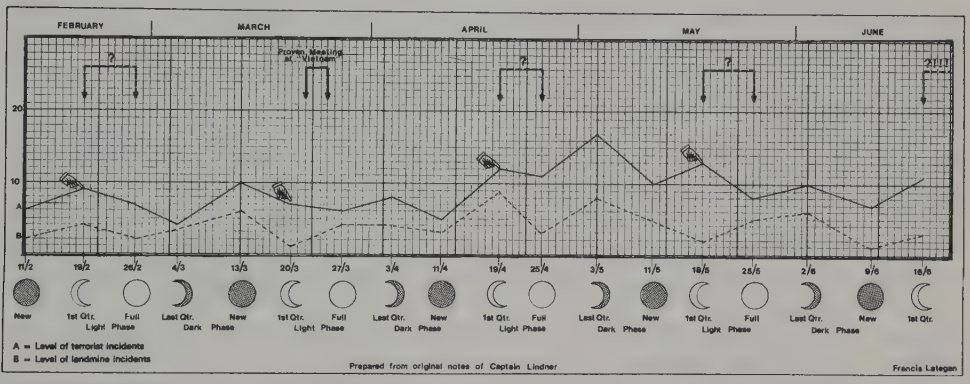
After plotting terrorist incidents and landmine explosions within the Nehanda Sector on the graph . . . the two patterns coincided reasonably well, but never totally, as landmines could remain in position without detonation for a long time, whereas terrorist attacks happened when they happened.

He then brought in the moon phases which were also a known and important factor. The best time for military operations was commonsensibly, when one could see . . . which was invariably when the Security Force's maximum effort was put into effect.

He then noticed the dates of the last known terrorist meeting . . . the 22nd to the 25th of March . . . fell between the first quarter and the full moon . . . when there was the greatest amount of moonlight . . . it also showed a drop in their activity.

It seemed, he decided, that although he had not expected it, the terrorists held their meetings, but otherwise stayed low while there was the most moonlight . . . presumably because the Security Forces were then most active in ambushes and on observation points.

Having added to the graph everything which was fact . . . he now plotted intelligent guesses . . . guesses that previous meetings had been held between the 22nd and 25th of February, the 22nd and 25th of April and the 22nd and the 25th of May – all of which dates had fallen between the first quarter and the full moon.



L3. Operation *Newton*. The principle of pattern analysis adopted in this internal operation netted the Security Forces seven ZANLA terrorists.

His chart now clearly showed there had been a marked and regular down-swing in terrorist activities over all those periods which tended to support his theory that terrorist meetings were being held monthly during these times.

Which meant the next ZANLA get-together would likely occur between the 16th and the 23rd of June towards the latter day . . . it was, needless to say, within the period of the first quarter to the full moon.

But would anyone else believe it?

Well, I did . . . and we discussed his graphs with our Special Branch friends, but they did not share my enthusiasm and shrugged it off . . . there was enough concrete evidence of the presence of ZANLA in the *Hurricane* operational area to follow up . . . without bothering with vague theories.

A pseudo callsign was sent back in . . . yes . . . they said it seemed possible the information was correct . . . the Nehanda Sectorial meeting would be coming up around that time . . . but it couldn't be confirmed.

To me it was not something we could easily dismiss . . . for it was likely that around about the 23rd of June, the whole command element for ZANLA in the Nehanda Sector, plus maybe fifty

or so rank and file terrorists, would be meeting somewhere in the general area of Mauswa village. It was a tantalising situation for, if Alan had read things correctly, it was feasible an operation there could effectively neutralise the whole Nehanda Sector terrorist effort with one savage body blow . . . providing immediate relief to the hard-pressed Centenary and Shamva farmers.

I took Alan Lindner, together with his charts, to the Bindura Joint Operational Command for a meeting with the newly-promoted Brigadier Sandy Maclean, who had just taken over command, his Brigade-Major Mike Shute and the Special Branch Officer at the Joint Operational Command.

I outlined the general situation, and then handed over to Alan who explained the co-relationship of the information revealed by his graph.

I suggested an outline plan the Selous Scouts had worked out. Our guesstimate suggested when the meeting was taking place . . . but not precisely where . . . which gave it all the ingredients for the classic cordon and search operation.

Brigadier Maclean agreed and accepted the plan as a basis for the forthcoming operation. Before we left, the Brigade Major and his staff were hard at work developing the final plan . . . which became a very good plan indeed.

The plan called for the Selous Scouts to establish clandestine observation points within the cordon area and, for the Special Air Service to carry out reconnaissance patrols of the area at night to monitor movement.

The most vital stage of the operation was the establishment of the cordon and, for this to be a success, a very high degree of secrecy was demanded. The area to be cordoned was roughly eight kilometres by five kilometres, a very large area, and for this reason it was vital the human circumvallation be in position, and restricted enough by last light on the first day to prevent the enemy slipping through the gaps during the hours of darkness.

To mount the operation, twelve companies of troops, supported by 2-Engineer Squadron, the mortar platoon from 1-Rhodesian African Rifles and an Air Force effort of sixteen helicopters, three Provosts, seven Trojans and four Dakotas, were allocated.

Units involved in the cordon and sweep were D and E Companies, the Rhodesian African Rifles, 1 and 3-Commandos and the Support-Commando of the Rhodesian Light Infantry, who between them also manned three Fireforces, one made up of a K-Car and five G-Cars, and the other two each consisting of one K-Car and four G-Cars, 2-Independent Company, 1-Rhodesia Regiment, D-Company, 2-Rhodesia Regiment, D-Company, 5-Rhodesia Regiment, and G-Company of 8-Rhodesia Regiment.

The whole plan worked well. The cordon troops, some of whom had to climb an escarpment during the darkness, did extremely well and were in position by first light . . . and . . . complete surprise was achieved.

At 10h00 on the 24th of June, Sergeant Bruce Fitzsimmons, manning an observation point, observed unmistakable evidence of the presence of a large group of terrorists and immediately called for a Fireforce, working on the sound principle that a terrorist bird in a contact is worth much more than two in the bush. Although there was considerable sympathy for his Fireforce call, it was quite rightly decided to let those particular birds get away . . . rather than lose the chance of bagging the rest.

Another Scout observation point reported that quantities of food, far in excess of normal village requirements, were being cooked in the village below them. Another Selous Scout callsign reported that an ox was being slaughtered in a village they were observing.

All signs indicated that our quarry was about to step in the bag.

The Fireforces were keyed up to go throughout the first day but, apart from a few abortive call-outs, they did little but play cards by their helicopters.

Unfortunately, the closing bands of the cordon had not constricted sufficiently by night-fall to prevent break-outs, but this was no one's fault. For, as often happens in broken bush country, plans and final results rarely coincide satisfactorily. The cordon troops though, had a lively night as the terrorists . . . by then thoroughly aware they were encircled and in danger of being trapped,

tried to break out but, unfortunately for them, the thickly bushed area was bathed in the bright light of the full moon.

One terrorist group, comprising some ten terrorists, surprised a stop-group of five men whom they subjected to a sudden heavy and withering fire, then seized the opportunity to slip past unscathed to the safety beyond.

Special Air Service callsign, 77-Alpha, on reconnaissance, saw through their night glasses some ten terrorists heading first in a south-easterly then in a north-easterly direction.

At dawn the further constriction of the cordon began once more but, as the day progressed, it became evident that most of the terrorists had succeeded in slipping between the stop-groups during the night.

That day there were three contacts with terrorist groups in which a total of six terrorists were killed and another captured . . . a total of seven being accounted for, which was not a particularly unsatisfactory result when one considers the cordon's jaws had not been closed in accordance with the anticipated schedule.

Information gained from the capture, confirmed by gleanings from a subdued and co-operative set of locals, revealed that thirty three terrorists had been within the cordon during the evening of the 24th of June.

Just prior to the operation commencing, Superintendent Mac McGuinness had received information that the Nehanda monthly meeting was scheduled to take place only on the 27th of June, and that another group of nine terrorists were on their way in to the Kandeya Tribal Trust Land, but . . . it was too late . . . although we would have liked to delay the operation till they were safely within the trap, we couldn't take the chance of delaying and maybe losing the lot.

The lesson . . . one we in the military never seem to learn . . . is to never attempt to cover too much ground with too few troops.

One thing is certain, many of the conventional soldiers achieved far more during the course of this operation than they had personally achieved during the previous few months of walking the bush on cross-grain patrols, in the vain hope of bumping terrorists.

Unfortunately, the operation was never repeated, although it could have been, as it had been successful . . . we might have got more the next time.

Eastern Border: Ngorima Tribal Trust Lands: Search for Obert Dhawayo

We had made repeated requests to programme the eastern border with a view to future operations there, but all these requests had been turned down, mainly because the Provincial Special Branch officer at Umtali doggedly opposed it.

A major reason why he resisted our presence there was that he felt we might, by our methods, subvert a population hitherto unsullied by terrorists and do their job for them.

He was also of the confident opinion that as the former terrorist organisation, FRELIMO, was now the government of Mozambique, they had overnight become conservative and would refuse to help ZANLA with rear bases, from which terrorist infiltrations into Rhodesia could be made.

Rhodesia, in his opinion, was in an unassailable position, because at the drop of a hat, she could crush Mozambique economically by switching the movement of her exports and imports from the ports of Beira and Maputo to South African ports . . . FRELIMO just wouldn't risk it.

Which goes to show, when you think about it, how wrong people can sometimes be, particularly when they superimpose European thinking onto African situations.

I could not get it through to them that with only a few men, whose pseudo identities would be revealed only to a few selected contactmen, under the guise of being ZANLA commissars preparing the way for the terrorist onslaught, we could successfully monitor the whole area.

This would ensure the Security Forces would get timeous warning instead of having to wait for the war to suddenly erupt there, as it had in Rhodesia's north eastern border area in 1972.

Yet, it was becoming highly obvious that this area would soon be in the forefront for ZANLA attention, as from over that border they could virtually cast their eyes on some of the richest tea

estates, farms and forestry industries in Rhodesia. Close by too, were huge areas of tribal trust land, peopled by hundreds of thousands of tribesmen ... prime targets for subversion and recruitment into ZANLA's ranks.

Unlike the north-eastern border area ... operation *Hurricane* area ... good metalled roads ran parallel to our border inside Mozambique, making it logistically ideal for the development of terrorists, and for the establishment of staging camps. It clearly presented ZANLA with their most golden opportunity to date, to force the Rhodesian Security Forces into extending their areas of operation, so Rhodesia's already meagre manpower resources would become even more thinly spread.

We finally did get a chance to work in the eastern border area, but the opportunity came about for reasons other than the correct ones. A renegade terrorist, Obert Dhawayo, had moved from Mount Darwin to the Chipinga area where he had become active in the lucrative field of armed robbery. The final straw for the CID in Umtali came when he hijacked a mobile bank, murdered one of the cashiers and escaped with some sixty thousand dollars.

Someone, as a consequence, suggested that maybe the Selous Scouts would be able to help.

Army Headquarters relayed this request to me during June, and suggested it would be good for the morale of the Chipinga farmers if we assisted.

My immediate reaction was to turn the request down flat ... I was short of men and I remember grumbling in righteous indignation to my second in command, Captain Jeremy Strong, that our job was to kill terrorists ... not to arrest criminals for the police. It seemed to me then, and still does now, remarkable that so much importance was attached to a relatively unimportant issue, when the whole eastern border of Rhodesia, at that time, lay completely naked and open to rape by ZANLA terrorist insurgents. Anyway, be that as it may, after my initial grumblings I had second thoughts and decided to agree to the request ... because it obviously afforded us an excellent excuse to find out what was really going on there, which we had been longing to do anyway.

I despatched Jeremy Strong to the Ngorima Tribal Trust Land, obstensibly to assist the CID, but in reality, to dig deeply and find out the thoughts of the tribesmen in the area and ascertain if the first stage of politicising and organising the tribesmen by ZANLA had begun.

To effect an entry into the Ngorima Tribal Trust Land, Jeremy used the cover story that his group had moved south from the Mtoko area to prepare the way for ZANLA groups who would soon be entering from Mozambique ... how prophetic this was to prove eventually.

To give this cover substance, the wives of various *tame* terrorists were used to porter war supplies on their heads.

It proved a very sobering exercise and their report gave a very accurate indication of things to come. They reported, even at that time, that the whole tribal population had given every indication of being utterly committed and sympathetic to the ZANLA cause and were eagerly awaiting the advent of their arrival. The renegade terrorist, Obert Dhawayo, was not regarded as a criminal at all by those formerly very law-abiding people, but rather as a sort of Robin Hood and everyone was willing to help, feed or hide him. It was of interest to find out that he was not living in the Ngorima, but was based in Mozambique from where he made his criminal forays.

Another indication of the high degree of subversion was that after having spent some two weeks in the area, living off the fat of the land, the presence of the pseudo callsign was not once reported by any informers of the Police, Special Branch or Internal Affairs.

That area incidentally, became right at the end of the war a so-called *liberated* area, where the locals governed themselves without assistance from the government. Occasionally, the Security Forces would enter in a show of strength, but having done so they would depart before night fell and leave the tribesmen to their own devices.

The Selous Scouts, as has been made clear, fell directly under the control of the Army Commander and no one else, at that time, including the Chief of Staff, was privy to our *modus operandi*. This led to considerable, but I think understandable, bitterness amongst some of the

officers of field rank in command of Joint Operational Commands (JOC's) and sub-Joint Operational Commands (sub JOC's) and local Special Branch and Police commanders. It also led to a great deal of animosity being generated against me in particular, and the Selous Scouts in general.

The *frozen area* concept, for example, did more to raise blood pressures and hackles in the operational areas than any other single factor. The reasons were, I think, mainly because few took the trouble to properly read the instructions governing them, and because it was a human problem. Brigadiers and Colonels took great exception to a Major, as I was then, calmly *freezing* sectors in their very own operational areas, on my own say so.

Yet, it was beyond argument that pseudo operators couldn't possibly work areas containing other Security Force units with any degree of safety ... the shooting of Andre Rabie had established this.

The old system of working out *frozen area* boundaries for each new operation was tedious, time consuming and inefficient, so my operation's staff had demarcated the existing operational areas into smaller sections, ensuring the boundaries, wherever possible, were natural ones. The reason for this was sensible, for natural boundaries are not subject to change and are easily recognizable. The only artificial boundaries used, were ones which couldn't readily be changed in character, such as main roads and railway tracks. Bush roads were never used as they had the habit of changing course with the advent of each new rainy season.

As a matter of policy, normal activity in a *frozen area* was encouraged so as not to arouse the terrorists' suspicions. If, for example, a crime was reported within a *frozen area*, the Police would inform us immediately stating the places they wished to visit for investigational purposes. We would immediately warn any Selous Scouts' pseudo groups operating there and ... only afterwards ... give the Police permission to go into the *frozen area.*

The use of main roads traversing them was unrestricted, but Security Force personnel were not allowed to go more than two hundred metres off the road.

In spite of these very sensible and certainly not unreasonable safeguards, there were continual and sometimes deliberate breaches of *frozen areas*, and, as a result, we became the most ambushed members of the Security Forces ... we got it from every direction.

Parachute training

Having had time to work with and become very close to our African soldiers, I had begun to realise and accept in all humility, that I certainly, and the Rhodesian Army in general, had made a gross error in allowing ourselves to become over-engrossed with the European element of the Army, to the extent that it had largely overlooked the high potential of the African as a Special Force soldier.

This is not meant to be in any way derogatory to the Rhodesian African Rifles, from whom we drew most of our non-commissioned officers ... they were not a Special Force unit where white and black had to have that close and personal reliance upon each other.

There is no doubt that in the Selous Scouts we proved conclusively by results, that well trained and good African soldiers, often had tremendous advantages in the African context over their European comrades in the Special Force role, because of the colour of their skin ... it is impossible for a European to successfully imitate an African.

It appeared to me there was still a lot of escalation left in the war we were fighting and I knew the time had come to ensure our black soldiers had all the necessary training to develop their capabilities, for when we would have to cross into neighbouring hostile countries to perform Special Force tasks.

I was determined that when this time came, the Selous Scouts would match or surpass the boldness and effectiveness of the best anywhere.

I decided the first area in which we should become militarily proficient, we, meaning the whole regiment of Selous Scouts, would be in military parachuting.

In 1960, during the Federal Army days, an experimental team had been sent from the Royal

Air Force Parachute Training School, at Ringway in England, to evaluate the feasibility of military parachuting in Rhodesia.

At that time there was a fallacy holding sway that one could only parachute in Rhodesia in times of emergency, because of the high altitude . . . the air was too thin . . . the best one must expect, on a good landing, would be two broken legs. The R.A.F. evaluation team showed this premise to be totally false and although the measured rate of descent was slightly faster than at sea level, they proved there was no reason why military parachuting shouldn't become a totally feasible operation in Rhodesia.

Four or five African soldiers had taken part in those evaluation trials and had won their wings as parachutists, but their achievement had soon faded in the Army's memory.

My hard won experience of the ways of the Rhodesian Army, which were more than likely the ways of other armies too, told me that if I approached the problem of how to get my men taught parachuting in the manner as prescribed by correct and laid down military procedures and practice, it would take a minimum of nine months before the first African Selous Scout launched himself through the door of a Dakota.

The first thing required would have been a paper written in quadruplicate, discussing in detail the merits and demerits of the scheme. My recommendation would be necessary in the last paragraph, where I would, needless to say, formally recommend the scheme. This would then be read and commented upon caustically, amusingly or disinterestedly and, more than likely without understanding, by various Staff Officers, none of whom would ever be likely to don a parachute or care much above a shudder about the thought of donning one.

If I were fortunate, my paper might have found its way to a conference table where certain senior Staff Officers gathered periodically to discuss such things before turning them down and condemning the author for stupidity . . . or worse still . . . damning his career permanently for being too clever or too imaginative for the Army.

Realising the dangers of this, I embarked upon a more cautious plan with a great deal of circumspect. A good friend of mine, who used to captain the rugby team I once played for, was holding senior rank in the Rhodesian Air Force. I called on him and embarked on a concentrated campaign to bring the *Blues* onto my side. After I had outlined the advantages of having African paratroopers on external operations . . . which we both agreed seemed inevitable . . . he confirmed the Air Force would lend me their full support.

With his agreement, I paid a visit to the parachute training school where I broached the subject to the instructors and soon got them on my side too. Having achieved this much, I moved on to the last and to what I knew was going to be the trickiest part of my scheme . . . convincing the Army Commander . . . General Walls.

My experience of General Walls had taught me that he tended towards the conservative and held that regular officers' instinctive dislike of changing anything established by custom, tradition or by long standing regulation, unless there was a good and convincing reason for it.

Parachuting in the Rhodesian Army was strictly a European preserve established by custom. The Army had forgotten that Africans had ever been taught to jump. The only soldiers who jumped were the Special Air Service . . . the SAS . . . an all-European regiment.

I took a deep breath and launched into a current rundown on the Regiment and made the point that in my opinion, the continual stresses and strains of our pseudo type operations, were having an adverse effect upon our African soldiers, and if we wished to retain them in this type of work, which we obviously did, it was vital that more thought be given to their training. I said they needed something extra to give them stature . . . something to set them apart from the other African soldiers . . . something unusual to boost their morale . . . something like . . . well, parachuting.

I quickly listed the advantages of training Africans as well as European Selous Scouts in parachuting, and the benefits it would give us on external operations. The General listened to me, his brow reefed in a thoughtful frown, as I marshalled the evidence in favour of my proposal, until I finally talked myself out.

To my astonished joy, because I hadn't believed he would, General Walls agreed . . . what's more, he thought it an excellent idea.

Armed with his approval and with my head euphorically held high, I went down the corridor to see the G-I . . . the officer in charge of training for the whole Army. We exchanged greetings, then, after some inconsequential conversation, he enquired how he could help me.

'The General has given us the go-ahead to parachute . . . I wonder if we could sort out timings for the parachute courses while I'm here. I've seen the Air Force already and any time suits them . . . apparently it's up to you.'

'That's funny, Ron,' he said bemused, 'the General didn't say anything to me.'

'Oh, well,' I replied, 'you know what he's like with us Selous Scouts . . . he never tells anyone anything . . . sometimes not even me.'

'You're damned right there,' said the Colonel frowning, 'it makes it damned awkward for me sometimes though. Anyway, leave it with me . . . I'll come back to you as soon as I've fixed things up with the Air Force.'

A week later the Colonel G-I called me and apologised for not being able to allocate a whole parachute course to the Selous Scouts immediately, but said that for starters, he had organised fifteen places on a course to be shared with the Special Air Service, commencing on the 11th and ending on the 29th August.

Our temporary camp at Inkomo was still very basic and stark, but by dint of ingenuity and with some scrounged panelings and a quantity of very attractive local stone, we had transformed a tin building into a very presentable and comfortable mess for the warrant officers and senior non-commissioned officers, both black and white.

I walked in there that evening and was immediately invited to have a drink by my African Regimental Sergeant Major.

'RSM,' I said after taking a few swigs, 'we've been allocated fifteen places on the next parachute course and I intend to send four Europeans and eleven Africans. Now RSM, you will appreciate as much as me, that every European in the Army, from the General down, will be watching this course with great interest, because most of them are convinced that Africans will refuse to jump. I believe this to be nonsense and I'm sure you share my view, nevertheless, I don't want any failures. I want a list of the eleven best African soldiers in the Regiment . . . I expect you to be certain in advance they will all qualify.'

'*Ishe*, I will give you the ten names tomorrow.'

'Eleven,' I said tartly.

'Yes, Sir . . . my name and the names of ten soldiers . . . will be with you by 08h00 tomorrow morning.'

I looked at the African Regimental Sergeant Major, he was well over forty.

'RSM, I appreciate your attitude, but let's be practical. You are too old . . . you will never get through the preliminary ground training,' I said kindly.

'Sir,' replied the RSM snapping formally to attention, 'I must go on this course . . . I am the senior African soldier in the Selous Scouts . . . the young soldiers expect me to show them the road ahead. That's why I must be the first African in the unit to jump. If I don't, I will never be able to hold my head up amongst the men . . . I might even have to resign.'

I looked at him for several long seconds, while I digested this and a few fluid ounces of my beer, then shrugged.

'I just hope your bloody old kneecaps can take the strain!'

The course went well, and as I might have expected, the African Regimental Sergeant Major became the first African soldier in the Regiment to jump. Unfortunately, and to his great disappointment, he injured himself on his fourth jump and was unable to qualify along with the rest of the men on the first course. However, he attended another later and qualified with ease.

An inexplicable resentment over this parachuting by African members, was generated amongst certain quarters of the Army, and there were even grumblings from the Special Air Service, when the news broke that the Selous Scouts were parachuting.

Their Officer Commanding, Major Brian Robinson, even came to see me at Bindura to complain that I had taken the wheels out from under his Regiment by going into parachuting.

Yet, ironically, as the war progressed and the shortage of helicopters for the Fireforces became critical, a command decision was made to train a major proportion of all the regular units, both black and white, which is perhaps what should have been done in the piping days of peace. There is, after all, nothing particularly spectacular in ordinary military parachuting ... it is merely an express means of delivering a soldier to battle.

As a matter of interest, 1-Commando, Rhodesian Light Infantry, established afterwards, what I believe is still a world record, by parachuting three times into different callouts in different areas, on the same day, each of which resulted in a contact and a firefight.

Attacks against ZANLA in Mozambique sanctioned

At this time, somewhat belatedly, but because of the large-scale incursions of terrorists which were taking place and the intelligence which indicated many more were about to take place, we were finally given reluctant permission to take out and generally harass known ZANLA staging posts within Mozambique.

However, we were subjected to strict limitations which made an already difficult task doubly difficult. We were forbidden to strike any target more than five kilometres from the Rhodesian border and, at all costs, avoid attacks on FRELIMO. If any staging posts were occupied jointly by ZANLA and FRELIMO, we were told to leave them alone. The final but most dangerous and inhibiting restriction we suffered from, was that under no circumstance, would any of our external operations be allowed air support.

We had long discussions amongst ourselves to formulate our tactics within the confines of these orders, finally deciding that to ensure we did not stray over their boundaries, we must first find the camps, then establish beyond all doubt the indentity of their occupants by reconnaissance, and afterwards to mount our attacks on them only during the hours of darkness.

And so ... very tentatively at first ... the Selous Scouts finally went to war in Mozambique.

1975 had not been a particularly good year for the Selous Scouts, from a kills point of view.

The prime reason for this had been the large exodus of terrorists from the *Hurricane* operational area during the so-called ceasefire ... at which time certain of the Rhodesian hierarchy responsible for planning the war and the Government had been optimistically believing that we had the enemy on the run ... but, it had been a planned extraction by the ZANLA terrorist organisation so the future planning and strategy for the war, now they had secure rear bases in Mozambique, could be formulated.

The point-blank refusal at top level to allow us to go into Mozambique to break-up their organisation and obliterate their bases piecemeal before they become too deeply entrenched ... and also to set up monitoring networks in the internal areas next likely to be targets for ZANLA ... the Eastern Districts, in point of fact ... was to have a far-reaching effect upon the course of the war.

From a purely selfish point of view, so far as the Regiment was concerned, the lull had enabled us to double our strength and catch-up administratively and also allowed us to concentrate on thorough training in some very vital areas.

1975 could be likened to the lull before the storm ... and ... while those running the Rhodesian war machine vacillated and dithered, the terrorists, particularly ZANLA, purposely set about consolidating and improving their position, taking the fullest advantage of the windfalls which had been presented to them on a plate by the collapse of the Portuguese in Mozambique.

It had been a sort of phoney war ... but its almost immediate escalation after the end of this year would not, by any stretch of imagination, ever again allow it to be called phoney.

PART 5

The Storm – Into the eye of the Hurricane
1976

Operation Underdog: Attack on Chicombidzi Base: January, 1976

On New Years day, the 1st January, a few FRELIMO soldiers based at Chicombidzi camp, attempted to cross into Rhodesia through the mine belt. One luckless private stepped on a mine and was seriously injured. His comrades and friends fled in disorder and left him alone to his own thoughts . . . and slowly bleeding to death. Needless, to say, this period of reflection before he became a Security Force prisoner, was from our point of view, well spent . . . and . . . when he was questioned, he was more than willing to speak of a ZANLA transit camp situated nearby Chicombidzi which was in almost continuous use by ZANLA.

We were tasked to conduct the raid . . . our first into Mozambique . . . to capture prisoners, documents and war material.

On the 17th January at 18h45, Lieutenant Tim Baxter, commanding a party of six European and eight African personnel, were dropped by helicopter G-Cars on the Mozambique side of our mine belt, but still within Rhodesia.

They marched by compass to where the captured FRELIMO soldier had said the staging post would be found, arriving at 21h00.

The raiding party lay low in the bush listening to men talking and laughing in the camp, and were relieved to hear Shona and not dialects of Mozambique being spoken. The identities of the occupants were clearly ZANLA.

They waited until all talking and laughter had ceased and it seemed likely the enemy had gone to sleep. After another long wait to be safe, Tim took three callsigns close in to do a reconnaissance using night binoculars. During the next three hours they picked out and identified two grass *bashas* and a grass conference, or dining-room shelter.

It was clearly a terrorist camp, but no people were seen, presumably because they were all asleep.

The worrying point was the small number of grass structures. There had to be more than they had seen . . . but where were they?

Lieutenant Baxter ordered an attack and the callsign adopted a halfmoon formation and advanced towards the grass shelters.

At fifteen yards there was a warning shout, followed by a burst of automatic fire.

The Scouts returned fire heavily, expending according to the final count after the action, a thousand rounds of small arms ammunition, ten mortar bombs and an RPG-7 rocket which scored a direct and most satisfactory hit on one of the *bashas*.

Afterwards, they conducted a sweep and while doing so stumbled on a further five *bashas* and two large pole and grass roofed structures which had all been heavily hit during the battle.

Unluckily no prisoners were taken and no enemy bodies found, but several large pools of blood, blood trails and marks indicating wounded and dead had been dragged away to safety, were seen.

The thick bush and waist-high grass precluded any attempts being made to follow the enemy up . . . it would have been unproductive and highly dangerous.

A lot of kit, equipment and weapons littering the staging post . . . too much to be carried away by the Scouts . . . were thrown into the grass structures which were then burned to the ground.

At 05h10 on the 18th January, the Selous Scouts were uplifted and flown back to Rhodesia without incident.

Joint Operational Command, Chiredzi, established: January, 1976

Taking full advantage of the dense cover afforded by the heavy rains, ZANLA launched a series of determined and large-scale incursions into the *Hurricane* operational area in order to regain momentum, and also opened a number of new fronts, as they were termed, along other parts of the border, particularly in Inyanga North and Chipinga.

Using the Maputo/Malvernia railway to the border to bring up supplies, they also made major incursions through the Gona-Re-Zou game reserve into the Matibi Tribal Trust Lands, lying just south of the vast sugar, citrus and wheat irrigation schemes at Triangle and Chiredzi.

A new Joint Operational Command (JOC) was established at Chiredzi and during January, 1976, I flew down to choose a site for a new Selous Scout fort.

To my surprise, I found the Joint Operational Command had been established in tents on the old grass airstrip immediately adjacent to the township of Chiredzi. Perplexed, I asked the colonel commanding, why they were not using the modern tarmacadam airstrip ... the civil airfield ... ten kilometres away at Buffalo Range. He replied frostily that he wished to be close to the Police and Special Branch station, so all his sources of intelligence were close to hand.

I replied, equally frostily, that the purpose of my visit was to select a site for a Selous Scout fort and its best position was clearly in close proximity to the Joint Operational Command (JOC), but I was concerned that the grass airstrip would become periodically inoperational during the rains because of the mud. I suggested the whole Joint Operational Command centre, the Selous Scouts and the Air Force establish ourselves at Buffalo Range which would put us in a similar advantageous position to the one we enjoyed at Mtoko.

Unaccountably, the Colonel lost his temper at my suggestion and forcibly spelled it out that he had no intention whatsoever of being dictated to by the Air Force.

I gathered the impression that he and the *Blues* were not quite seeing things eye to eye, so I went and spoke to the Air Force. They, understandably, were unhappy too at the idea of operating from a grass airstrip, when one of all-weather tarmacadam was available nearby. The Colonel's decision was clearly a ridiculous one. If the grass airfield became too muddy, fixed wing aircraft ... parachute carrying Dakota's particularly ... would be unable to take off and this would seriously deplete the Fireforce.

I decided to act independently and sited the new fort at the Buffalo Range civil airfield, regardless of what the Joint Operational Command decided, and passed my decision on to the Air Force.

The Colonel was decidedly put out by my decision and immediately lodged a formal complaint with the Army Commander, General Walls, who, to my surprise, upheld him initially and ordered me to establish the Scout fort next to the grass airstrip. However, after I had made representations stressing the importance of getting wounded terrorists into hospital without needless delay and stressed that landings year-round could only be guaranteed on an all-weather airstrip, he relented and allowed me a freedom of choice.

The Air Force Tactical Headquarters promptly moved in next to us.

Once the Security Forces got into swing countering terrorist insurgency there, it soon became clear to everyone that the majority of callouts of the Fireforce were being initiated as a result of Selous Scout activity.

The delays and the inconvenience in briefings mounted up steadily until the Fireforce was moved, with reluctance, across to Buffalo Range on a daily basis.

A year later, the Joint Operational Command gave in with bad grace and transferred across to Buffalo Range too, but to make it clear they were not kow-towing to anyone ... particularly the Selous Scouts or the Air Force ... they constructed their main camp at the far end of the airstrip, about a kilometre away from ourselves and the *Blues*.

So, sometimes, runs the military mind.

Chiredzi: Hunter/killer operation: February, 1976

In February, a small reconnaissance patrol, Sergeant Chipundu and two troopers, encountered a

newly infiltrated and recently trained party of fifty terrorists, who were being conducted into the south-western operational area by three ZANLA veterans.

The opposing parties sighted each other simultaneously, but the Selous Scouts opened fire first, killing two of the three veterans long before a ZANLA bullet was fired.

The remaining terrorists retaliated raggedly with a fusillade of badly aimed smallarms fire, plus some panic-fired sixty millimetre mortars, but after a short moment, they wilted, broke ranks and fled in disorder leaving the bodies of their comrades behind.

The terrorists' reserve ammunition stock . . . a large quantity . . . was recovered abandoned in the bush in the immediate area of the contact.

Mtoko Tribal Trust Lands: Pseudo operations: February, 1976

Lance Corporal Banyi Dabodo, slightly built and very intelligent, seemed on first appearance to be more like a clerk or a school teacher than a non-commissioned officer in the Selous Scouts. He was quietly spoken too and of mild manner . . . but it was a mildness which was deceptive.

He was deployed with a small group, into the Mtoko Tribal Trust Lands where they quickly made contact with the local ZANLA network and established themselves.

One morning in February, he and another of his men, were talking to a group of locals in a village, when a messenger arrived with a message from a ZANLA Section Commander who wished to make contact with his group.

Caught unawares, he knew he had only two alternatives . . . either meet the terrorists . . . or refuse.

Lance Corporal Banyi Dabodo knew that if he adopted the latter course, the chances of their cover being blown were immediately magnified, particularly as he'd already been making tentative approaches through contactmen to meet other gangs operating around Mtoko . . . so he agreed with some trepidation.

On arrival at the meeting place, Lance Corporal Banyi Dabodo and his companion found themselves surrounded by eight fully armed and threatening terrorists who put them through a lengthy session of penetrating questions.

There seemed little doubt that the ZANLA Section Commander was highly suspicious . . . the slightest slip on their cover stories would spell their immediate, out of hand, execution.

Knowing this, they play-acted for their lives until finally, to their immense relief, their bona fides were accepted.

Later, after making their farewells, the Scouts hurried briskly away until it was safe to radio the map co-ordinates back to base so a Fireforce could be brought in, but unfortunately, they were already heavily committed elsewhere . . . and . . . by the time they had disentangled themselves, it was too late.

A month later in the same area, they were again approached by a contactman acting on behalf of yet another terrorist group who wished to set up an immediate meeting.

Lance Corporal Banyi Dabodo agreed without hesitation, but this time he took the precaution of taking two Selous Scouts along with him.

As he had expected, the meeting place was the centre of a well-sited ambush, controlled by twelve heavily armed terrorists.

A long session of highly complicated questioning and cross-questioning commenced until eventually, the terrorist commander and six of his men stepped from cover to warmly shake the hands of the visitors. While these salutations . . . hand clappings and hand shakings . . . were in friendly progress, a further six guerrillas left their hides, and joined the welcoming committee.

Suddenly and inexplicably things went sour. Perhaps one of Lance Corporal Banyi Dabodo's men had said something out of place . . . the wrong thing obviously . . . the terrorists' mood switched instantly back to one of suspicious hostility.

Lance Corporal Banyi Dabodo realised he would never be able to sweet-talk his way out of this one. He swung up his AK sub-machinegun, slipping the catch to automatic and opened fire, his men following his example.

The terrorists, thoroughly taken by surprise and caught on the wrong foot by the rapid about-turn of events, fled in panic, leaving behind three dead.

Operation Small Bang: Attack on Pafuri Base: February, 1976

A large volume of Special Branch intelligence, confirmed by the interrogation of captures, indicated the south-western area of Rhodesia had been selected as one of the most important fronts by both the ZANLA and the ZIPRA terrorist organizations.

A glance at the map of Rhodesia, with particular emphasis to rail and road lines of communication with South Africa, clearly indicates the reasoning behind their strategy. If those supply routes used for vital imports and exports were cut . . . both road and rail . . . Rhodesia would collapse.

ZANLA and ZIPRA had been forced by the Organization of African Unity (OAU), to present a united front to the outside world, but this so-called alliance was shaky in the extreme and deeply riven by suspicion, mistrust and tribal division. The alliance really existed only in the minds of the Organization of African Unity, and certainly didn't exist where it mattered . . . on the ground in the Rhodesian bush.

ZANLA, deeply conscious of the strategic areas open to ZIPRA infiltration and not to them, by way of Botswana to the west and Zambia to the north, were determined to be the first to subvert and control the south-west.

The southernmost part of Rhodesia lent itself particularly well to the logistics of ZANLA infiltration, as they were able to use the railway running from Maputo to the border town of Malvernia opposite Vila Salazar in Rhodesia and the road running parallel to it, enabling large groups of terrorists to arrive at Malvernia on the border, fresh and fit. From there, they would be moved north and south to various border staging posts from where they would infiltrate Rhodesia.

A route much favoured by ZANLA to get to the Sengwe and Mtetengwe Tribal Trust Lands in the Beit Bridge area, was a dirt road running from the railway line to Pafuri where the borders of Mozambique, South Africa and Rhodesia all junctioned.

Pafuri had its own history from the pioneering days of southern Africa, when it was known as Crooks' Corner. The settlement then actually straddled the international boundaries of South Africa, Rhodesia and Portuguese Mozambique, and was the hang-out of numerous white criminals and ivory poachers who merely stepped from one bar to another, and thus from one country to another, should a mounted Police patrol from one or other of the countries, be reported as approaching.

Information to hand gave us a rough fix on a transit camp sited just to the north of Pafuri. According to a very recent capture, the camp contained some thirty ZANLA terrorists who were based up and awaiting instructions to cross the border into Rhodesia.

Speed was clearly all-essential, if they were to be eliminated before they moved out.

Because the camp was sited almost on the border, the support of Hawker Hunters was conceded should our troop-carrying helicopters be endangered by anti-aircraft guns, which were thought to be sited on the outskirts of Pafuri.

The force level allocated for the attack was four helicopters (one K-Car and three G-Cars), two Hawker Hunter fighter/bombers, a mortar detachment, an infantry company from the Rhodesian African Rifles and a Selous Scouts' reconnaissance team.

The reconnaissance team and those men of the Rhodesian African Rifles detailed as stop forces, moved to the border and established a firm base.

At 19h30 on the 23rd February, the reconnaissance team of three Selous Scouts crossed the border into Mozambique.

The assault troops and their aircraft, less the Hunter jets, were positioned on the bush airstrip at Mabalauta, thirty five minutes helicopter flying-time from Pafuri.

The reconnaissance team located the camp without difficulty, but the denseness of the vegetation there made a detailed reconnaissance over-hazardous, because of the danger of

discovery by ZANLA sentries or outposts. Having concluded this, they made for a nearby village, reasoning that someone there should know the layout of the place.

An African Scout rapped smartly on the door of the largest hut in the village, assuming it belonged to someone of importance, like the chief or village head.

A man appeared and the Scout told him they were members of a ZANLA group returning from operations in Rhodesia who had lost their way.

The man not only gave them directions but also insisted on personally guiding them to the camp. Instead, after getting all the information they could . . . they took him back to Rhodesia with them in case he decided to warn the terrorists.

At 02h30 on the 24th February, the reconnaissance team led in ten stop groups, each comprising four soldiers, and pre-positioned them on the outskirts of the transit camp, ready to cull a deadly toll of the enemy.

Because of the dense bush, the plan had been amended and the Hunters were going in first with an airstrike, closely followed by the helicopter-borne assault force. It was hoped that any survivors scattering into the bush would be cut down by the stop units.

After positioning the stop units, the reconnaissance team set up electronically detonated flares as flight markers for the Hunter jets when they commenced their bombing runs, but unfortunately, they almost immediately afterwards bumped an outpost of two sentries, who challenged them in English.

The Scouts had no option, even though they knew it would warn the camp, but to open fire . . . both sentries dropped their weapons and fled.

An uproar of voices came from the camp, so they called for the air strike to commence as soon as possible. That, and the helicopter-borne assault, was not a marked success, as only three dead terrorists were found during a sweep of the camp area, along with five guns, a large amount of ammunition and a quantity of useful documents.

Radio Intercept Services, who routinely monitored the FRELIMO radio net, established afterwards that the planned incursion had been totally disrupted by the raid. The forty one terrorist survivors had fled into the bush in disorder, and independently made their own way back to ZANLA headquarters in Mapai, where, as was to be expected, they were not welcomed with enthusiasm.

Chiredzi: Hunter/Killer operation: April, 1976

The flat and featureless terrain south of Chiredzi is difficult country for pseudo operations, as it is almost impossible to find high ground from which to direct Fireforces onto targets. Because of this, we tried an experiment of using small patrols of Selous Scout trackers operating in hunter/killer roles, using their advanced bushcraft and tracking skills developed by training and by constant operations in the bush, to best advantage.

On the 18th April, a patrol of three men, commanded by Sergeant Lucas, a Territorial soldier on call-up, visited a tribal village during the course of an, until then, quiet patrol.

Something about the behaviour of the villagers aroused his suspicions. Perhaps they were too eager to welcome them . . . maybe they seemed too relieved to see them depart. Whatever it was, he obeyed the warnings of his sixth sense and after leaving, back-tracked and unobtrusively went into hiding from where he and his men were able to keep the village and the villagers under intensive surveillance.

After watching for some hours, it became clear by the activity, that something was going on . . . the villagers were preparing for something . . . but what?

It could have been any number of innocent happenings which occur within the confines of tribal village life. It might have been preparations for the funeral of a villager . . . or a ceremony to contact the tribal or family spirits to find out why that villager had died. It could even have been the preparations for a wedding where, in African custom, the large and copious quantities of *nyama* – meat, *sadza* – maize pap, *doro* – African beer made from rapoko and maize meal . . . would not have been out of place.

Evening crept up eventually and the pitch darkness of an African night fell, but Sergeant Lucas and his men stayed in position, unmoving and unseen.

At almost 21h00 their patience was rewarded . . . the villagers commenced singing in close harmony . . . ZANLA songs . . . *Chimurenga* revolutionary songs.

The Selous Scouts left their hiding place and moved through the bush to the cleared area on the edge of the huts.

A short period of listening and observation confirmed that a meeting of some fifty people was in progress. They were being addressed by a ZANLA officer, armed with an AK rifle, which he was displaying and using to emphasize his gesticulations.

Having identified the other terrorists present . . . there was one acting as a sentry on each flank of the crowd . . . the Scouts crawled with experienced stealth through the wet dung of the cattle kraal, until they were able to stand up and merge with the crowd at the edge of the meeting area without detection.

They stood for a moment watching the enthralled crowd gaping in a dramatic pause created by the theatrical oratory of the terrorist . . . they waited, open mouthed for him to continue.

He spoke.

Sergeant Lucas signalled, and with great coolness the Scouts eased their way through the crowd until they reached the front.

The speaker was pumping his AK sub-machinegun up and down above his head.

'*Pamberi ne ZANU* . . . forward with ZANU,' he bawled. '*Pamberi ne hondo* . . . forward with the war.'

There was an enthusiastic and tumultuous roar of applause from the captivated villagers.

Sergeant Lucas knew instinctively it was a cue he must not miss. Calmly and unseen he raised his rifle, took a sight on the terrorist and fired.

The bullet struck the terrorist in the centre of his face and he fell as if poleaxed.

For a frozen moment there was absolute and total silence . . . nobody in the audience could begin to believe what happened . . . then pandemonium broke out as the villagers and the remaining terrorists broke and fled in every direction.

Some terrorists, presumably those with combat experience, stood their ground and when they saw their fallen leader and some of their comrades running away, they assumed the worst and opened fire on them unluckily missing them, but killing some of the villagers instead.

Sergeant Lucas and his companions, taking advantage of the confusion, slipped back into the cover of the night, radioing a report back to base when they were clear.

Helicopters brought in a Police team to investigate at first light. The dead terrorist leader was immediately confirmed as the ZANLA Detachment Commander for the area.

This action, as minor as it was at face value, had tremendous repercussions upon the locals, for the terrorists lost a vast amount of prestige amongst the tribesmen because of the easy way their commander had died. The terrorists themselves, confused and unsure as to what had happened, favoured the most obvious and blamed treacherous tribesmen. So they stayed away and consequently lost much of the ground they had made in *politicising and organising* the villagers.

Operation Traveller: Attack on Caponda Base: April/May, 1976

Intelligence, which had been gleaned by Special Branch from the contactman captured inside Mozambique by Bruce Fitzsimmons, had given us the first intimation that the Caponda ZANLA staging post had again been brought back into use . . . presumably because it was clear of cholera.

As our first abortive attack on Caponda during March, 1975, had not been compromised because the base had been deserted, I decided to use the same plan of attack, which I put forward for consideration.

We still faced the same problem, at least initially, an approach march of about fifty five kilometres north from the Rhodesian border and every man in the patrol would have to carry an inordinately heavy load of ammunition and water. We knew from bitter experience

there was no water on route and, the only place available for re-supply was the well at Caponda itself, unless we were very lucky and found some by digging in the sandy bed of the nearby river.

We were given permission to go ahead with the attack and the limitations as to air-support were eased slightly after I made representations, by granting us the concession of using helicopters to drop the attack force in the vast uninhabited mopani forest, half-way to the target.

To overcome the water problem, two forty four gallon drums were to be dropped off with the troops at the half-way point, so they had a cache available for the return trek home.

Other than this, no further air support was allowed . . . and we still had to keep in mind the other serious injunction that no evidence must be left behind which could pinpoint Rhodesian involvement.

There was an almost compulsory element of danger built into this operation . . . time was of the essence as the men had to rely almost totally on the water they were carrying . . . so little time could be allowed for reconnaissance, once the team was in the area of the base. We had no option but to make it a quick *shoot and scoot* operation put in at first light with maximum firepower . . . followed by an almost indecently fast retirement to minimise the risk of an enemy follow-up.

The attack was scheduled for first light on the 27th of April . . . so during the afternoon of the 25th, the twenty man callsign comprising the attack force, mounted up and were helicoptered to the half-way drop-off point.

For the next thirty six hours the Selous Scouts force-marched to the target and, by the evening of the 26th, they were in the vicinity of the camp's fringes.

A reconnaissance patrol was sent in to check for changes to the known set-up of the camp area . . . but it still conformed to what was known.

For the rest of the night the men snatched what sleep they could. Then, just before first light, they moved into their attack positions on the camp's perimeter and at 05h50 they put in a deadly curtain of gunfire and went in . . . fast.

The building and the camp comprised eight crudely thatched *bashas* and a house of brick under corrugated iron, which, according to Bruce's captured contactman, housed the ZANLA command element and included a food store, an armoury and the Quartermaster's store.

To avoid having armed ZANLA terrorists walking through their country, the FRELIMO had ordered that when they were in transit, whether they were on foot, or vehicles or otherwise, they travel unarmed.

To cater for their arming, FRELIMO had set up armouries at strategic points nearby the borders and, prior to an incursion actually taking place, weapons were brought by FRELIMO in bulk, in the case of Caponda, from Mague to the north or from Mkumbura in the south.

The actual issuing of arms was strictly controlled too . . . every FRELIMO officer controlling the issues had a high ranking member of ZANLA actually living with him as a liaison officer . . . who, after the stuff had been drawn from the main FRELIMO stores, stayed with the equipment until it had been issued to the terrorists.

So, it was for this reason, the attacking force laid the initial weight of fire against the brick house where it was likely the ZANLA liaison officer and any store of arms would be found.

Unfortunately, he was not there . . . perhaps he had gone visiting . . . or perhaps he had been sleeping in one of the grass *bashas* in an attempt to escape the oppressive heat.

During the sweep afterwards, the callsign found themselves joined by a dazed and certainly somewhat shell-shocked ZANLA terrorist, who had mistaken the Scouts for his comrades.

He swiftly revived from his state of shock when he realised his error and sprinted for the tree-line at the edge of the camp . . . refusing to heed all calls to halt . . . so he was shot dead.

At the camp the Selous Scouts destroyed forty SKS rifles, a large quantity of sixty millimetre mortar bombs, various explosive items, and a big quantity of clothing, blankets, camouflage uniforms and medical supplies.

The most important discoveries were in the way of registers listing the names and the serial numbers of weapons issued to all the terrorists who had ever passed through the base, and their destinations ... and, even more vital to us ... the names of all the contactmen and trusted sympathisers in the ZANLA Nehanda sector.

Although the raid was a disappointment in terms of counted kills ... it was certainly not wasted for the value of the captured documents outweighed any number of kills we might have achieved.

In spite of this, we were to learn later from a radio intercept that seven ZANLA terrorists had been killed in the attack and another sixteen wounded, who were medically treated at Mague village.

The task-force returned to Rhodesia without incident.

Captain Rob Warracker

During March and April the Selous Scouts commenced testing operations in Matabeleland to ascertain the depth of ZIPRA infiltration, and during the course of these we began to work with Captain Rob Warracker of the Special Air Service, who at that particular time was the Brigade Intelligence Officer for 1-Brigade at Bulawayo, then commanded by Brigadier John Hickman.

Rob Warracker was a highly intelligent and a thoroughly professional officer, who very quickly established excellent working relationships with the Bulawayo Special Branch and with ourselves when we commenced working in his area.

The degree of co-operation between Rob and the Special Branch and ourselves became so good that we even allowed a small callsign to work directly under Rob's command ... it was something we'd never done before and would never again repeat.

He was a totally dedicated and sworn Special Air Service man ... no other regiment existed ... so naturally, he, as with his brother officers in the *Supers*, tended to regard the Selous Scouts askance if not with direct distaste. But, once he'd become involved and saw at first hand the highly unusual, but very productive methods we used to achieve results, he grew very interested but, more importantly, he became highly involved and I knew it was merely a matter of time before he asked to join us.

Then Special Branch Bulawayo requested assistance in abducting a known ZIPRA terrorist recruiting agent, living in the Bomangwato area of Botswana. As usual, we were up to our necks with work and very short of officers, but I tentatively agreed, provided 1-Brigade, Bulawayo lent me Captain Warracker to run the operation. However, I insisted that if he were allowed to run the operation, he must first come to Inkomo from Bulawayo so he could marry up with and train the callsign he would operate with. Besides this, whether it was liked or not, our command and operating procedures differed radically from the normal Rhodesian Army procedures.

As might have been expected, there was a tremendous storm of opposition from Brigadier Hickman, whom I suspect, well knew I was angling to get one of his best officers permanently into the Selous Scouts. However, although this might have been true, I dug in my heels for the much more immediate and important reasons.

'No Captain Warracker ... no operation.'

Army made the decision and on the 12th May, Captain Warracker arrived at Inkomo and sought me out to report his arrival. I was heavily engaged in the operations room at the time. It was one of those occasions ... and was just what I needed to swing him into trading his fawn Special Air Service beret for the brown of the Selous Scout one.

As is explained elsewhere, the Selous Scout command system was a very personalised one and every callsign in the field, whether inside the country or out, was on the same frequency ... our own regimental net. The operating procedures were slick and efficient, which was vital, otherwise our system would have become unwieldy and our radio net cluttered. I insisted that our central control be in a position to monitor every transmission, so that at all times I and my operational staff were totally in the picture with every callsign scene. This was not vanity or over-control ... it often happened that two callsigns within one area wanted Fireforces at the same time and each

area had only one Fireforce. I however, had a direct radio link with Air Force Headquarters and this made it simple for the Air Force to move a Fireforce or fixed-wing strike aircraft from one area to another with the minimum of delay.

I looked up as he walked in and nodded, but I was concentrating on problems relating to a callsign's transmission coming in over the radio.

Five, or it might have been six of our callsigns, had visual targets . . . no guess work at all, but terrorists actually within sight and pinpointed. Each of them were calling for a Fireforce.

The operations room must have seemed like a lunatic asylum and all the staff, including myself, were either manning the telephone or the radio sets, or moving stickers and tabs from one part of the map to another. What's more, everyone was talking at once. I had responded to an urgent summons at 06h15 that morning and had pulled on a track suit and made for the control room at top speed, unwashed and unshaven.

When Captain Warracker walked in, there were perhaps forty to fifty terrorists marked up on the glass panel in front of the duty officer, in groups of eight to twelve, together with the co-ordinates of their whereabouts in various parts of the country. Against the groups, in chinagraph writing, was scrawled the estimated time the Fireforces would be able to get around to launching strikes and killing them.

As the Fireforces went in and later came back reporting successes, the contacts were rubbed off the glass.

Three hours after Rob Warracker had walked in, things quietened down sufficiently for me to be able to talk to him. He had been watching the goings-on with intense fascination.

'Hell, Sir,' he said, 'are things always like this?'

I looked at him steadily. 'Not always . . . sometimes we really get busy.'

After the initial familiarisation I had insisted upon, and after various rehearsals had been carried out right up to the full-dress one, Rob Warracker and his team were moved to the Botswana border, only to be withdrawn back to Inkomo again after Special Branch, Bulawayo, reported the recuiting agent had moved to Gaberone.

Rob should have returned to Bulawayo, but he instead found reasons to delay his departure and I made no effort to deny their rather thin validity. Two days later, after a considerable amount of heart searching, because the Special Air Service is renowned as one of the most elite international clubs of Special Force soldiers, he delicately broached the subject of joining the Selous Scouts.

I barely concealed my delight and telephoned Army Headquarters right away to request his immediate transfer.

Brigadier John Hickman, his worst fears realised, was not having any of it and demanded the soonest return of his Intelligence Officer.

Luckily for the Selous Scouts, no senior officer other than General Walls, could demand to know the whereabouts of any Selous Scouts' officer, even an attached one, so I stone-walled the fuming Brigadier, ensuring that until Rob Warracker's transfer to us was officially sanctioned, he was kept on *vitally important* operations.

The Selous Scouts, as a result, gained a remarkably efficient officer.

Operation Detachment: Mini-column attack on Chigamane: May, 1976

Vehicles similar to the Portuguese Unimog made their first appearance in the Rhodesian Army about this time.

We in the Selous Scouts looked at these vehicles and at each other and soon reached a joint conclusion. A dab of paint here, a dab of paint there, and a change to some FRELIMO number plates and we would have vehicles looking remarkably like those the FRELIMO had inherited from the Portuguese Army.

Major Butch Duncan, the Selous Scouts Liaison Officer at Chiredzi, was tasked to disrupt vehicular movements in Mozambique's Gaza Province, by laying mines and ambushing transport.

The inhibiting restrictions we were normally subjected to on our external operations had been

lifted to a very slight extent and we were allowed to attack any vehicle carrying terrorists, even if the vehicle and the drivers were undoubtedly FRELIMO.

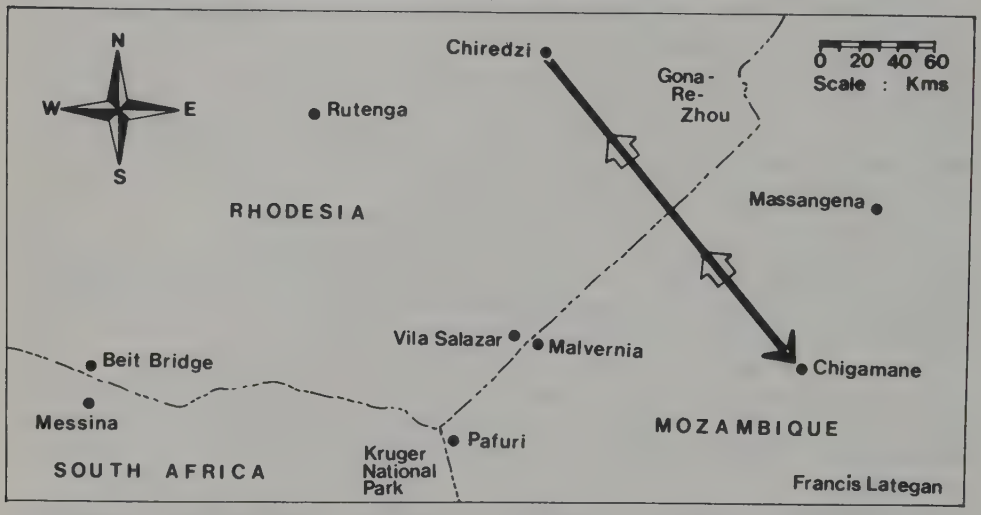
There was a grave lack of water in the Gaza Province of Mozambique and the terrain, being predominantly sand veld, made anti-tracking almost an impossibility. Because of these limitations we did our mine-laying close to the border, rather than deep inside.

Once FRELIMO and the ZANLA terrorists realised this though, they simply changed to using the minor roads to deploy men to the border, rather than the major ones.

FRELIMO, meanwhile, commenced the daily practice of sending engineers along the main border roads to clear them of mines . . . after which we would go in again and the whole cycle would recommence.

We decided to test-run our pseudo Unimogs and picked a road inside Mozambique used only lightly by FRELIMO traffic.

Two ten-men teams, using four vehicles between them, were tasked to proceed to the small village of Chigamane, some hundred and eightly kilometres from the border by road. The teams included a mortar and rocket team, a mine-laying and a demolition team.



L4. Operation *Detachment*. Map of mini flying column attack on Chigamane: May, 1976.

The mini-column . . . as it came to be called . . . left late upon the afternoon of the 13th of May . . . with orders to lay mines along the route, destroy all water pumps, capture any ZANLA terrorists or FRELIMO soldiers for later interrogation purposes, and destroy any stores or supplies found.

A staging post was set up just inside the Rhodesian border where the overall commander, Butch Duncan, with extra troops and vehicles, stood by to go to the assistance of the column, should it get into difficulties.

The mini-column, commanded by Lieutenant Tim Baxter, set off and experienced no difficulty at all . . . the local population inside Mozambique scarcely giving them a second glance.

At every road junction, they marked the ground with mealie meal to assist them in finding their way back on the return journey and also to guide Major Duncan in, if it became necessary.

The roads were in the normal bad state of repair expected of Mozambique's roads, but a slow although steady speed was maintained all the way to the objective.

Tim and his men reached Chigamane at about midnight and proceeded straight through before turning about.

A large Isuzu truck, parked beside a lean-to on the outskirts of town, was promptly blown up.

As it blew, the Scouts opened up with machine-guns, mortars and rockets on various sentry posts and ZANLA camps on the fringe of the town.

No fire was returned so it was assumed that both the FRELIMO and ZANLA forces there either lay absolutely still, or had fled into the surrounding bush.

Having shot up everything worthwhile, the column departed Chigamane for home, stopping to lay a scattering of Russian TM-46 mines at various points along the route.

They crossed back into Rhodesia and linked up once more with Major Duncan in the early hours of the morning.

It was a small exercise of no particular military significance in itself, but its success was to have a significant effect on the ZANLA terrorist organisation, for we had at last found a way to overcome the cumbersome limitations which, until then, had prevented us from reaching into Mozambique and giving the terrorists back better than they were giving us.

Inyanga: Pseudo Operations

Sergeant James MacGafferty, a former Special Air Service soldier, commenced service with the Selous Scouts as a tracking instructor in our Kariba bushcraft and tracking school. After seeing at first hand how the Selous Scouts operated, he applied for and passed a Selous Scouts' selection course, which qualified him to go on operations.

His military deportment and sometimes astonishingly casual manner of dress, was not of a style designed to endear him to certain officers and regimental sergeant majors of the old peacetime school. Whenever his hair reached a totally unacceptable length . . . even for the Selous Scouts . . . I would approach him in the bar and firmly suggest he requisition a handbag from the Quartermaster's stores. The hint always worked, and the next day a couple of inches of hair would be chopped off and honour satisfied all round . . . until his unruly mop grew again.

James, Rhodesian born but of Irish extraction, possessed a quiet and even temperament when sober, but when in his cups, his stroppy ancestry emerged . . . the result was invariably trouble. It was his uncompromising habit when out on a social jaunt, to select the biggest and chunkiest man in the bar and then deliberately set out to antagonise and goad, until a brawl erupted.

The sad part for James was, that by the time the fighting commenced he was usually so incompetently drunk, he would always end up with a complete bashing. His spells of rest and recreation inevitably brought a fresh crop of bruises, swollen eyes and maybe a bent nose, but he never seemed to learn. Once, after having been thrown bodily down the stairs of a nightclub by the bouncer, he still picked himself up, dusted himself down, then painfully but gamely climbed back up the stairs to start the next round.

So much for James MacGafferty, the lanky raw-boned trouble maker, when in a civilised atmosphere. But when out on operations, he became a totally different character. He had a tremendous rapport with his African soldiers and although it seemed alien to his basically aggressive nature, he never raised his voice to them. They viewed his drunken escapades with unbridled amusement, but they were always genuinely sympathetic if his features showed a new set of bruises, testifying to another heavy night out on the town.

He had quickly shown a marked talent in the field of pseudo operations and it was no haphazard selection when I detailed him to see what could be made of Livisoni Musati, the ZANLA Detachment Commander for Inyanga, who had been made prisoner unwounded and uncompromised by the Police Support Unit, and handed over to us by the Special Branch at Umtali.

His capture had come in a chance contact during which his two terrorist companions were shot and killed. He had desperately tried to conceal his true identity from his captors, pretending he was merely an ordinary cadre, or private soldier.

Sadly for Livisoni, some letters found on his person clearly identified him, and the final nail came when one of our *tame* terrorists added a personal identification.

James, together with a Special Branch officer, swung quickly into action with their routines and before long, Livisoni decided, as many others had done before and many more would do afterwards, that the Selous Scouts' offer was one he would be foolish to refuse.

Shortly afterwards, James finely briefed his troop on the information obtained and then

deployed them back into the field together with the newly *tame* terrorist Detachment Commander.

Musati, a well educated man, had until capture, commanded some thirty terrorists in three sections of ten men operating in and around the Inyanga area.

Using letters addressed by Livisoni Musati to a section commander, contact was soon established between the Selous Scouts' pseudo group and the terrorists and a meeting set up.

As usual, the Selous Scouts went through the entire identification routine, including the good faith measure of moving into an ambush set up by the terrorists, laying down their weapons and undergoing a thorough and gruelling interrogation to prove their identities.

The exercise was repeated on two more occasions during the next three weeks and twenty two of Livisoni Musati's detachment were made prisoner. Unfortunately, eight of the last section captured, deserted back to the enemy before they could properly be turned.

The benefits of the operation were considerable, as it effectively neutralized the entire Inyanga detachment area.

The eight surviving terrorists ran to the ZANLA High Command in Mozambique and gave warning that almost a detachment had defected to the Selous Scouts . . . and were now *Skuz'apo.*

The immediate consequences were that during the next few months Inyanga was given a very wide and wary berth indeed by infiltrating terrorists, because they no longer knew who they could or could not trust.

Brutus: The Berliet Troop Carrier

On the 28th of May, at first light, a five man patrol set up ambush on the road leading north-east along the Rhodesian/Mozambique border inside Mozambique. Their task was to eliminate any ZANLA terrorists being transported along the border to infiltration points. The vehicles ZANLA were using were known to be FRELIMO vehicles, but the embargo on hitting them had been lifted. The patrol placed a claymore mine in a tree overhanging the road and set it for electrical detonation, to enable them to direct the full force of the blast into the rear of any vehicle passing below the tree.

At 07h00 the sound of a vehicle coming from Malvernia was heard. Immediately it came within sight, the ambush party identified it as a six-wheeled drive Berliet troop carrier . . . some of which had been handed over to FRELIMO when the Portuguese had left the country . . . but the only occupants were a FRELIMO driver and a guard, the latter armed with an AK, so it was allowed to pass unharmed through the killing ground.

Five hours later it returned, and on coming into view the ambushers immediately saw it was fully loaded with ZANLA terrorists passengers.

This time the FRELIMO crew were not so fortunate and, as the vehicle passed the tree, the claymore was triggered by an instant shiver of electricity. The explosion was devastating and the blast sabred through the vehicle's passengers with grimly satisfying results.

The badly wounded FRELIMO driver, to his credit, accelerated furiously and weaving madly from side to side, drove right through the killing ground and escaped.

The Selous Scouts, although disappointed at being unable to examine at first hand the murderous effects of their claymore mine, because they were forced to withdraw over the border back into Rhodesia to escape the inevitable follow up by FRELIMO, were nevertheless elated afterwards to hear that an intercept of the FRELIMO radio net had credited them with a tally of fourteen ZANLA terrorists killed.

Two days after this ambush the pilot of an Air Force reconnaissance aircraft landed at Chiredzi and reported that he had spotted a large truck, which had apparently been abandoned in the bush nearby the scene of the recent ambush.

A Selous Scout patrol re-crossed the border and, working from the directions given by the Air Force, soon located the truck which was, as suspected, the six-wheeled drive Berliet. The FRELIMO driver had kept going for about three kilometres past the ambush site, before being forced to stop because of a puncture apparently sustained from our gunfire.

A cursory examination of tracks found around the truck told the story and indicated that FRELIMO had sent vehicles up to carry away the casualties but, probably because they feared another attack, they had not changed the wheel and taken the vehicle away with them. Naturally our patrol, being Rhodesians subjected to sanctions, rather than being the recipients of large dollops of world aid, were more economical of mind . . . so they repaired the offending puncture and drove the vehicle back to Rhodesia.

Once back in Rhodesia, it was taken to Inkomo Barracks where some of our mechanically minded Territorial Army members enthusiastically and lovingly stripped it down, checked and expertly reassembled it. After a respray with paint to match its original coat of olive green, it was fitted with forged FRELIMO number plates.

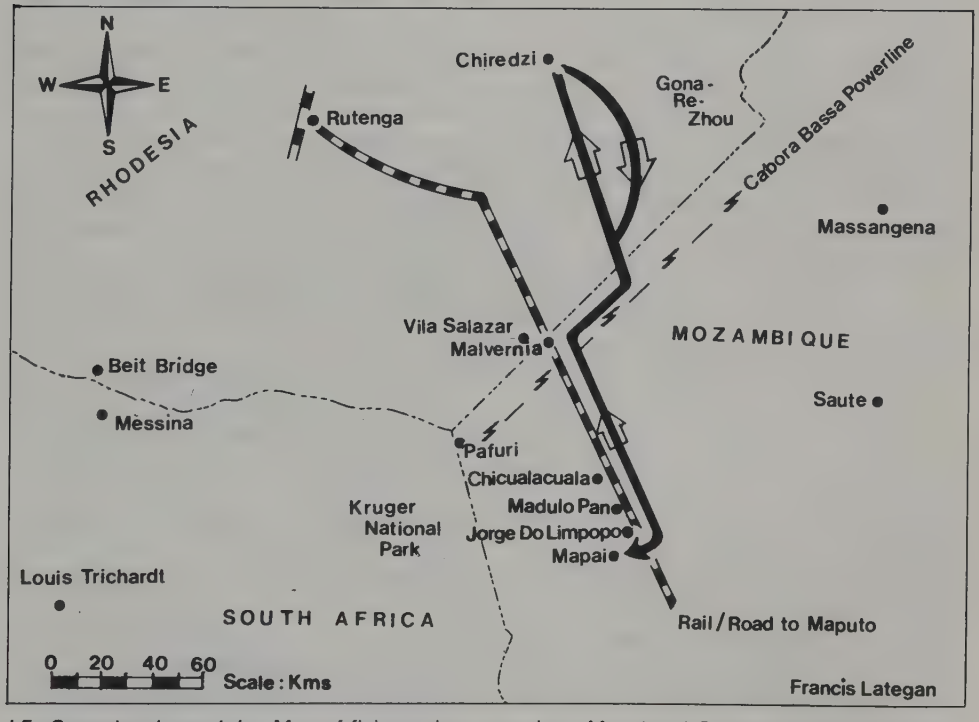
I stood with a group of our men while we collectively admired it.

'It's one hell of a brute, Sir,' one soldier said.

It was too, and so Brutus became its name.

Operation Long John: Attack on Mapai and Chicualacuala: June, 1976

Having achieved the successful column attack on Chigamane, no time was wasted in getting down to plan the first real flying-column attack on the transit camp at Mapai and the terrorist staging post known as Chicualacuala.



L5. Operation *Long John*. Map of flying column attack on Mapai and Chicualacuala: June, 1976.

The first requirement was to get a reconnaissance group into Mapai, in order to pinpoint the exact whereabouts of the transit camp, which could not be picked up on aerial photographs.

Transit camps, as the name implies, have fluctuating populations and we needed to be sure, having made the effort to drive over one hundred and ten kilometres to the base, that we attained a good kill and avoided the Russian-supplied FRELIMO armour, which was believed to be at Mapai. For, once again, we would be without air support.

Eventually, I settled on the idea of sending a civilian Land-Rover into South Africa with

Captain Basil Moss and four Scouts in civilian clothes on the pretext they were visiting the Kruger National Park.

The plan was for Basil to drop off a two-man patrol at a point parallel to Mapai on the game-fence which separates Mozambique from South Africa. He would then continue his visit to the Kruger National Park, posing along with the other two Scouts as holiday makers totally absorbed in photographing and viewing Africa's big game.

The two-man reconnaissance team would meanwhile, walk on a bearing of ninety degrees for thirty kilometres, until they reached Mapai.

If, as a result of their radioed reconnaissance report, an attack was immediately mounted, they would be picked up during the attack by the column itself and dropped off close to the border afterwards, when they would clandestinely cross the game fence back into South Africa, rejoin Basil Moss and the others and return with them to Rhodesia . . . like the good tourists they were pretending to be.

I had no intention of telling the South Africans, as at the least, it could cause them embarrassment, and at the most, they would likely forbid it.

If it really became necessary, of course, the reconnaissance team could return with the column to Rhodesia, but this would have meant the ultimate discovery of our scheme by the South Africans, who certainly would not have taken kindly to that sort of thing happening behind their backs . . . particularly, when as they were at that time, busily engaged in trying to court friendship with the new FRELIMO Government.

I was driving back from Umtali mulling over the problem of reconnaissance, when I noticed one of the old manually operated ganger's trollies . . . the type pumped manually by one man at each end to provide locomotion . . . moving on the railway line parallel to the road.

The very thing, I thought, thinking of the long flat stretch of railway line which passed close to Mapai. If we built one of aluminium, with rubber-coated wheels, capable of being quickly stripped down and reassembled, we could, one evening, send a foot patrol over the border with the components. Once they were south of Malvernia, they could reassemble the contraption on the railway line and transport themselves overnight to the vicinity of Mapai.

Once in the region of Mapai, they would disassemble the trolley and cache the parts in the bush along with any extra food, water supplies and radio batteries which they couldn't carry and then continue with the reconnaissance.

After completing their task, they would return to Rhodesia in the same manner . . . with FRELIMO being none the wiser . . . for no tracks at all would have been left behind.

On my arrival at Inkomo I sent for Major Duncan and put the idea to him.

I also called for my Motor Transport Officer and instructed him to get his staff working on building the machine we needed.

The next morning Major Duncan came into the operations room carrying a large book and wearing an even larger smile.

'I discovered a much better idea,' he said triumphantly opening the book, which was an antique volume dealing with the history of the Boer war.

Inside was a photograph of a British infantry patrol of twelve men, all mounted on two pedal cycles . . . bolted together in tandem and designed to carry six men on either side.

According to the caption, it had been built as a means of patrolling the railway line and could achieve an average speed of thirty miles an hour. The contraption was kept on the track by the use of small rollers running against the side of the rails, which prevented the machine from derailing.

I needed to see no more and hastily re-summoned the Motor Transport Officer.

'Forget about the trolley,' I said showing him the photograph, 'we've come up with something better . . . get your lads to work right away . . . I want a fully operational bicycle built for two men on this principle to be ready by the end of the week.'

He met my target day and a dual bicycle or quadcycle, capable of being stripped and assembled with ease, was ready outside my office for inspection on time.

It worked like a dream and it was silent. It had an easy speed of between fifteen to thirty kilometres an hour, was easily maintained and had the added advantage of a nylon net being stretched between each bicycle as a sling to carry enough food and water to make a reconnaissance team self-supporting for fourteen days.

There is little need to point out, that since the days of the Boer War, huge advances had been made in the fields of plastics and metals, so it was consequently easy to make it light-weight and highly portable.

Sergeant Major Piet van der Riet and the intrepid Lieutenant Tim Baxter were chosen to do the reconnaissance and, while the men selected for the column busied themselves with training and vehicle modifications, they set off on long night training rides along a stretch of railway line running past the Inkomo Barracks.

Meanwhile, our workshops were busily modifying the Unimogs which were to be used on the column. The Chigamane operation had taught us that for a column to be effective in attack and to be able to look after itself in defence, heavy weapons and weight of fire was all-vital.

The heaviest weapon the Rhodesian Army possessed at that time was the old British twenty-five pounder, obsolete by modern standards, although still a very efficient piece of artillery for hitting power. Unfortunately, there were too many complications and difficulties attached to its employment on a column, not the least being its comparative unwieldiness . . . bearing in mind a small force would have to rely almost totally upon its speed and manoeuvrebility.

In the event none of these complications mattered, as it transpired the Special Operations Committee were petrified the guns might be captured and held up to the world as exhibit 'A' . . . proof of Rhodesia's *aggressive* actions against the *freedom-loving* and *peaceful people* of Mozambique.

The only anti-tank weapon possessed by the Rhodesian Army at that time was the British 3,5 millimetre rocket launcher . . . a clumsy weapon which didn't measure up, even nearly, to the Russian RPG-7 so far as handling and performance was concerned. As we had been given clear orders that no evidence, which could prove a Rhodesian part in the raid, must be left behind, it created no difficulties in us using captured RPG-7's.

By dint of a lot of persuasion I managed to obtain the loan of two Ferret Armoured Scout Cars from the Rhodesian Armoured Car Regiment, which kindled a lot of burning antagonism from them. In the first place, they insisted on supplying their own crews along with the cars, if they lent them to us . . . which, they were in any case, reluctant to do.

The Army Colonel on the Special Operations Committee, a conventional soldier with no experience of Special Force operations, came out strongly in support of the Commanding Officer, the Armoured Car Regiment.

'It is only right the cars should come to you complete with crew . . . after all,' he said reproachfully, 'how would you feel about it if you were he?'

'My feelings,' I replied, 'would be immaterial . . . I would just ensure I obeyed orders. The operation involves a high risk factor and only hand-selected men who have been trained and conditioned for this type of operation will be going on it. I should remind you also,' I added coolly, 'that everyone here should be aware that General Walls has graded all Selous Scout operations as *Top Secret* . . . In view of this, is the committee seriously suggesting that my first consideration should be whose feelings I hurt . . . and . . . for the same reasons, I take along crews of national servicemen who will likely be civilians again in a few weeks?'

We got our armoured cars . . . without the Armoured Car Regiment crews.

Experienced crew-men, in any case, posed no problem as a large number of Selous Scouts had once served with me when I commanded Support Commando, 1-Rhodesian Light Infantry, which had possessed, before the Armoured Car Regiment was formed, a reconnaissance troop of armoured cars, the Ferrets in fact, and a mortar troop. I believe that because of this, at the particular time in question, we had the best armoured car and mortar specialists in the whole of the Army.

Another thing we needed and which had to be fitted, was good inter-vehicular radio communications so orders could be transmitted while the column was on the move.

The plan we developed was based on two things . . . being able to achieve complete surprise and . . . the reaction of FRELIMO, hopefully being panicky and slow.

The plan was fraught with danger as we had no option but to take the only direct road to Mapai, which ran parallel to the railway line to Maputo for most of the way. The terrorist staging post of Chicualacuala was en route, where, according to a recent capture, some ninety ZANLA terrorists were present. But because of the vital importance of destroying a large arsenal at Mapai, it would only be attacked on the return trip . . . being left well alone on the forward one.

The column would by-pass Malvernia when going in, as there was at least a company of FRELIMO troops based there, who were backed up by seventy two millimetre anti-tank rifles, eighty one millimetre mortars, sixty millimetre mortars, a large supply of TM-46 mines, rockets and much other warlike stuff which could do us a lot of harm.

After the modifications and the rehearsals had been completed, the column vehicles were loaded onto a special train which was brought into the rail siding at Inkomo Barracks and later unloaded, using a ramp especially built by the engineers, at Nyala siding some eighteen kilometres from the Mozambique border.

On the night of the 21st of June, Sergeant Major Piet van der Riet and Lieutenant Tim Baxter, together with some other Scouts helping to carry the dismantled machine and equipment, slipped over the border.

On reaching the railway line on the Mozambique side, they got down to work and assembled the quadcycle. After placing it on the track they came up against a problem which none of us could possibly have foreseen. The ballast on which the track had been laid was so poor that the railway lines . . . to say nothing of the sleepers . . . had sunk partially into the ground . . . the quadcycle couldn't function.

Now, prior to going into all this, we had taken the trouble to approach Rhodesia Railways and, after having sworn an engineer to secrecy on the pretext we were planning to carry out demolitions inside Mozambique, we had asked him for the exact specifications of the line. He had assured us the track was identical in every respect to that in Rhodesia . . . so presumably he hadn't known the Portuguese had either been short of ballast, or of the energy to put enough down.

The team had no option but to dismantle the quadcycle and return with it to Rhodesia.

We were now faced with a serious timing problem for we had picked Sunday the 26th June as the day to launch the raid . . . it was a FRELIMO holiday . . . and, we knew from experience, that a holiday, particularly when it fell over a week-end, was a safe time to move about in an African environment, for that was the time for beer drinks . . . an occupation we were sure that most of the ZANLA terrorists and FRELIMO too, would be engaged in.

Major John Duncan decided there was no option but to get intelligence the only other quick way possible . . . by getting a capture.

During the night of the 23rd of June, a reconnaissance team took position off the road on the outskirts of Malvernia in Mozambique. Soon afterwards, a grey Land-Rover approached from the direction of Malvernia and braked to a halt when one of our African Selous Scouts, dressed in a ZANLA terrorist uniform, stepped into the centre of the road and signalled the driver to stop.

It turned out to be a most lucky break, for the driver was none other than a ZANLA liaison officer, named Gabriel, who lived with the FRELIMO commander at Malvernia.

His first reaction was to scold the Selous Scout for being in an out-of-bounds area, but his rantings terminated abruptly when the passenger door opened and Sergeant Major Jannie Nel got in beside him, scowled savagely through his whiskery beard and jammed the muzzle of an AK sub-machinegun into his ribs. At the same time the driver's door was opened and he was dragged bodily out into the road.

He took one very short look at his extremely tough captors and immediately volunteered to co-operate . . . before he was asked to in fact. The words poured out . . . he commuted regularly between Chicualacuala and Mapai . . . there were some ninety ZANLA terrorists in Chicualacuala . . . others were at Mapai . . .

He was handcuffed and nudged back inside the Land-Rover, this time into the passenger seat while a Selous Scout took over the wheel, and ordered to guide the patrol to a particular bush road which would take them back to Rhodesia.

Jannie Nel was in high spirits, not only because with the acquisition of the Land-Rover his patrol had an improved front image, but also because he now had an excellent and co-operative guide. But, Gabriel alas, had other ideas, even though he had submitted to capture so tamely and, as the vehicle reached the lit-up area on the outskirts of Malvernia, he unexpectedly opened the door and leapt out making a dash for freedom, bawling at the top of his voice for help.

Jannie Nel brought up his gun and shot him dead.

The patrol then retreated very hastily back to Rhodesia.

The Land-Rover of Gabriel . . . who had turned out to be a much braver man than had first been thought . . . made a very welcome addition to our slow but surely growing fleet of pseudo vehicles.

Sergeant Clive Mason, a Selous Scout and the only professional sniper the Rhodesian Army had . . . he once ran a sniping school but he was so particular he failed all the students . . . was sent to Malvernia with Detective Inspector Winston Hart to spot for him, to create some diversionary jitters to ensure the FRELIMO garrison were kept occupied while the column was in Mozambique.

Clive's weapon of preference was an SMLE Mark IV, 303 rifle.

On the 22nd June, after inspecting positions suitable for firing from with finicky care, he selected one of the old disused customs buildings nearest the fence from where he would have a clear view of the FRELIMO patrolling on the far side of the border.

Having chosen his line of fire, he removed the glass from the window through which he was going to shoot and then, together with Winston, set about completely clearing his field of fire into Mozambique, which involved walking into the border no-mans-land after dark and snipping holes in both the Rhodesian and the Mozambique boundary fences.

The next day, when the time was ripe, Clive fired and a FRELIMO soldier dropped dead.

The angry FRELIMO had no exact idea where the shot had come from . . . so they just blasted off a lot of angry small-arms fire into the general area of Rhodesia.

Having discovered that the FRELIMO were easily provoked into firing, Winston and Clive spent a busy evening drawing faces on calabashes and fashioning rough scarecrows which, once they were finished, they strung during the night hours amidst some trees opposite the Customs house, which moved when a cord leading to Clive's cover was pulled.

On the 24th June, Winston was spotting for Clive when a truck came down the road on the Mozambique side.

'I'm going to get the driver,' Clive said and squeezed the trigger.

There was a sharp crack and the driver he had targeted slumped dead over the wheel . . . the truck went off the road and careened into a house.

The FRELIMO immediately retaliated . . . shooting at the pumpkin dummies, which Winston had jerked so they were performing lunatic jigs . . . not only with small-arms this time, but with mortars as well . . . it was clear they had been waiting for the sniper to get up to his tricks again.

The Rhodesian garrison at Vila Salazar were forced to spend the remainder of the day lying low in their trenches.

On the 25th June, Clive and Winston reappeared at Vila Salazar carrying Clive's rifle and specialist sniping equipment.

'Oh, no,' said Julian Twine, the Police Inspector in command of Vila Salazar British South Africa Police station, putting his hand over his eyes, 'not you two bastards again . . . that means another day in the trenches!'

An hour later Clive selected his target and fired one carefully aimed bullet . . . another FRELIMO soldier dropped dead.

There was an immediate, even heavier reaction from the FRELIMO . . . who let loose with

heavy machineguns as well as with their mortars. The Rhodesian contingent on the other side of the border hurriedly threw themselves back into their trenches.

But this time the FRELIMO were not to have everything their own way.

'Okay, Steve,' Winston shouted into his radio handset to make himself heard, 'give 'em a rev.'

Nine kilometres away from Vila Salazar, a Territorial Army officer standing next to his beloved, although slightly antique British-made twenty five pounders, heard Winston's voice scratch through the radio above the sounds of bombardment . . .

The artillery officer said one word . . . a word he had been impatient to say and which his gun-crews had been eagerly awaiting.

'Fire!'

Moments later all hell broke loose in Malvernia . . . and suddenly it was FRELIMO who were cowering in their trenches . . . rather than the Rhodesians.

While these diversions had been taking place on the 25th, our column, numbering fifty-eight officers and men, crossed the border approximately twelve kilometres to the north, in four Unimogs with two Ferret Scout Cars leading the way in.

When they reached the Cabora Bassa power line, which runs parallel to the border, but is some distance from it, they turned south-west and drove until they reached the metalled track running next to the Maputo to Malvernia railway line.

At a small siding, twenty kilometres further on, they stopped and disconnected the telephone junction boxes and removed a section of the railway line, then mounted up again and proceeded south-east with all stops pulled out to Chicualacuala.

As the column neared Chicualacuala, even the veterans in the column tensed up and slipped the safety catches on their communist carbines for, if the FRELIMO were on their toes, it would end in a massive firefight and their main and final objective might well fade into impossibility.

Instead . . . the lone ZANLA sentry at the Chicualacuala railway siding gazed at the column with bored disinterest as it passed.

The column continued until it reached the turning point . . . the small settlement of Jorge do Limpopo. To everyone's surprise, the booms at the entrance to the village were raised and the sentry boxes deserted, as was the village itself.

They stopped in the area of Jorge do Limpopo and refuelled. Afterwards they laagered for the night, the fuel bowsers being unhitched and concealed in the bush away from the column as a safety measure.

Before first light, engines growled back into life and the column moved on, reaching Mapai just after 06h00.

As they drove in, each vehicle moved to its pre-designated position, arranged according to a carefully pre-rehearsed plan. The Selous Scouts immediately debussed and set about their nominated tasks with great determination.

At first appearance the place seemed deserted, but the litter of empty liquor bottles lying around indicated some sort of big celebration had either recently taken place, or had been rudely interrupted by the appearance of the Rhodesians.

Sergeant Major Piet van der Riet moved to his personal responsibility . . . the bus depot . . . and gazed with mouth-watering satisfaction at the neat row of fourteen Mercedes fifty-seater buses. He knew from his briefing, that they had been used regularly, in fact, extensively, for the transportation of terrorists to our border from centres as far in the rear as Barragem or even Maputo . . . and . . . all had been earmarked for destruction.

Piet, rapidly and happily went to work . . . destroying thirteen of them, using a combination of explosives and fire . . . then decided at the last minute it was a shame to destroy one particularly well-kept vehicle . . . it was almost new with an exceptionally low mileage showing on the clock . . . so he put it aside to be taken back to Rhodesia for use by the Selous Scouts.

In the centre of the little town was a large building . . . one part of it was double storey . . . while the forward section was what had probably been the village hall and cinema, in the days of Portuguese rule.

It was the building . . . according to intelligence reports . . . which was the main store where arms were kept for issue to ZANLA terrorists being infiltrated into Rhodesia's south-west.

Lieutenant Dale Collett's callsign set about clearing the building and soon found the information they had been briefed with was correct . . . a large downstairs storeroom was jam-packed full of arms and ammunition.

Dale reported his find of the arms hoard back to the commander, Major Duncan, who ordered that as much of it as possible be loaded onto the bus, newly appropriated for us by Piet van der Riet.

Occasional bursts of small-arms fire marked the progress of the house-clearing parties, but apart from that, there was virtually no activity, there being few signs to indicate life in the vicinity.

The upper floor of this building could not be reached from the lower floor but only via a flight of concrete steps which led to an upstairs passage off which there were rooms both to the left and right. The passage culminated . . . halfway down the length of the building . . . in a balcony overlooking what had once been the hall or cinema area.

Having satisfied himself his men were engaged in taking out as much of the arms and ammunition stores as could be carried in the bus, Dale went up the outside concrete stairs to check out the upper floor . . . no movement or signs of danger had been apparent from there.

He looked cautiously down the passage, his gun levelled . . . he was about to step inside . . . then inexplicably, he saw some whispy smoke hanging in the air halfway down the passage . . . he tensed up . . . clearly someone was there.

Dale moved cautiously into the passage to investigate . . . when there was a sudden burst of fire . . Dale dropped to the floor wounded . . . but not realising how badly wounded he was.

Using strength lent to him by desperation, he slithered back along the passage to where willing hands pulled him to safety.

As soon as he was clear, the Scouts opened up on the outside and into the passage with RPG-7 rockets. Then Tim Baxter, Bruce Fitzsimmons and Jannie Nel, in that order, moved into the passage to clear the place of any terrorists, or FRELIMO, who might have survived the attack.

There was another burst of fire which raked Jannie Nel across his back, he had passed the terrorist responsible who had been concealed either in the radio room on the right of the corridor, or in the roof . . . it is something we shall never know.

Jannie ran out of the building followed by Tim and Bruce . . . then Jannie collapsed at the foot of the stairs . . . dead . . . it was unbelievable . . . Jannie was dead!

In cold anger the Selous Scouts again bombarded the upper floor of the building with small-arms fire and RPG-7 rockets. During the course of this bombardment, Lance Corporal Burundu, who was firing into a window of the hall in front of the building, saw a terrorist appear on the inside balcony at the end of the upstairs passage which overlooked the hall . . . he fired a short burst and the terrorist tumbled over the balcony . . . dead . . . convincingly so.

The noise of battle subsided and Tim Baxter, certain the enemy who had done all the damage had been winkled out and killed, went up the outside stairs and re-entered the passage.

But some of the enemy . . . there were clearly more than one . . . were still alive and stubbornly aggressive . . . there was another short burst of gunfire which ripped Tim across his legs . . . creating a desperate mess of compound fractures. Luckily, he had fallen forward . . . and, consequently out of the line of fire of the terrorist who was concealed in the ceiling above the passage . . . but it also made him impossible to reach . . . or for him to crawl back the way he had come.

Tim Baxter though, was made of stern material and he did not concede defeat easily. Staying in concealment and using only his arms . . . while dragging his legs behind him . . . one of which was still only barely attached to his body . . . he pulled himself along, until he reached the inner balcony. Then, without hesitation, he pulled himself up and over the ballistrade and dropped into space, falling onto a mattress which his comrades had laid there for him. The agony he

experienced could only have been indescribable ... but ... the incredibly brave Tim Baxter murmured not a sound.

A medic, Colour Sergeant Bruce Langley, wasted no time and expertly set about treating his grievous wounds as others took up the firefight with the concealed enemy.

At this stage, the first sitrep came through to me at the Inkomo operation's room. Major Duncan requested permission to commit a fixed-wing aircraft which was orbiting at high altitude and acting as a radio relay along with a helicopter.

I released the helicopter immediately, to pick up the casualties ... then got through to General Walls and sought his permission to commit the fixed-wing aircraft on a ground strike.

After hearing what the situation was on the ground, he agreed.

Major Duncan liaised direct with the pilot of the fixed-wing aircraft who put in a rocket strike with pin-point accuracy. The fierce fire which immediately erupted in the arms-store building soon engulfed and killed all the enemy who had been resisting with such determination.

After the helicopter had picked up the casualties and taken off again, Butch Duncan reformed the column and set about retracing their steps on the return journey.

When the column, the bus in the lead to conceal their identity with Selous Scouts as passengers, arrived at Chicualacuala, they swung off into the ZANLA staging post ... which consisted of a compound of prefabricated tin huts.

The ZANLA terrorists present, were taken completely by surprise as the column's firepower hunted through the flimsy huts and culled the men as they broke and scattered in every direction.

Radio intercepts from the FRELIMO net, later reported nineteen ZANLA terrorists killed and eighteen wounded. This figure was confirmed by prisoners captured during a later engagement ... who also added that the camp commander had been amongst those killed.

Major John Duncan, who had successfully pioneered a new tactic in the Rhodesian war, with the use of only very scratch equipment, felt no shame afterwards in admitting he had been under enormous strain during the raid. His predominant thoughts, he told me, had been basic ... was the route they had taken to come in, the only one in existence, still open? Had FRELIMO seeded it with mines? Were ambushers lying in wait? What action could he take if mines or enemy recoilless rifles knocked out his vehicles? Would they be able to fight their way back home on foot without air support?

I had similar worries back at Inkomo ... unknown to him ... and I shared his apprehensions during every long kilometre of the journey back.

To give the column some protection, I managed to wheedle permission for a fixed-wing aircraft to overfly the column at high altitude during the return journey.

However, despite our joint fears, the column got back to Rhodesia without further incident or action.

The FRELIMO Government, as might have been expected, made a huge wail to the world about our *unprovoked* attack on them.

Usually, the sympathy they got when crying on the shoulder of the United Nations gave them considerable comfort ... considering the naked aggression against Rhodesia they were aiding and abetting ... but on this occasion they were frustrated ... for our raid barely gained mention in the columns of the world press, as it was upstaged by Israel's bold raid on Entebe Airport, when they rescued the hi-jacked hostages held prisoners by the lunatic Idi Amin and his Palestine Liberation Organization friends.

The casualties suffered by the enemy in this raid were high ... but so were our own ... and this was a severe blow ... particularly as they were all experienced and brave troop commanders ... and good friends.

Sergeant Major Jannie Nel was a fine and very professional soldier and his death caused widespread grief within the Regiment, which was still small, and the inter-rank relationships very personal. Jannie's African soldiers were distraught.

A large crowd of grieving relatives and friends gathered to pay their last respects at Jannie's funeral.

Many of them would have been thunderstruck . . . even horrified . . . if they had known that two of his African Selous Scout pallbearers . . . men whose eyes were openly wet with tears . . . were turned terrorists . . . who, because of shared dangers and a life of close proximity out in the bush . . . had absolutely idolised him.

Later, at the wake held after the funeral, they led a deputation of soldiers from Jannie's troop who came to see me.

'Ishe,' one sobbed unashamedly, 'our father is dead . . . who will see to us now?'

Standing away from us on the bar counter, was a lanky young subaltern, who had only recently completed his selection course. He was holding a huge balloon pot of African beer and trying to sink it without coming up for air, while being encouraged by a knot of men.

'Down! Down! Down!' they were chanting.

I waited until he had finished and then called him over. I held him by his arm and presented him to the African soldiers.

'Here is your new father,' I said.

The officer, who had already acquired an impressive battle record in the Rhodesian Light Infantry, earning the Bronze Cross of Rhodesia in the process, looked soberly at the men of his new troop and then at me.

'Sir,' he said, 'I only hope I'm big enough to step into Jannie's boots.'

That tribute to Sergeant Major Jannie Nel, from an officer whose personal gallantry had been proved beyond question, epitomised the esteem he had been held in the Selous Scouts and, for that matter, throughout the Rhodesian Army.

Lieutenant Dale Collett, the man I had once plucked from the wilds of Mozambique to become one of the pioneers of the Selous Scouts, had been flown straight to Salisbury's Andrew Fleming Hospital, where they had immediately wheeled him into the operating theatre.

The surgeon soon discovered Dale's spinal cord had been severed and gave the very sad, but very final, verdict that he would never walk again.

Lieutenant Tim Baxter had also undergone immediate surgery and for some days it was touch and go as to whether his leg would be amputated. Luckily, between the fine professionalism of the orthopaedic surgeons and the excellent first aid administered by the medic on the spot, Colour Sergeant Bruce Langley, he eventually recovered full use of his leg and at a much later date, was able to resume active service operations.

I will never, in my life, forget that first awful evening when I went to the hospital to see them. Tim was back from the theatre and . . . apart from being a little groggy from the aneasthetic . . . was almost back to his old cheerful self.

I went across to Dale's bed, but he was still sleeping.

'Wake him,' said the nurse, 'he's due for some medication anyway.'

I shook his arm gently and softly called his name. It was a terrible moment for me. I knew the doctors had broken the news to him that he would never walk again.

He opened his eyes, taking a few moments to collect himself.

'Hallo, Sir,' he said finally.

'How are you feeling?' I asked gruffly, finding great difficulty in even speaking.

Dale, obviously sensed what was going through my mind and placing his hand on mine, he looked up at me.

'Sir,' he said softly, 'don't worry about me . . . you've got bigger things to worry about. It's the chaps in the bush you've got to concentrate on . . . I'll be fine.'

It was all too much for me . . . here was a man struck down in the prime of his youth comforting me, instead of the reverse. I stood up abruptly and with tears welling unashamedly from my eyes, I brushed passed the lady who was later to become Mrs. Collett and left the ward.

'Hell,' exclaimed Dale to that very fine woman, 'what's up with the old man . . . I only told him to get on with the war.'

General Walls was personally delighted with the success of the attack, but his feelings were not shared by all the officers at Army Headquarters.

Dissatisfaction was expressed by some over the loss of three highly experienced troop commanders and, it was suggested, we would be better employed if we concentrated upon the internal operational scene.

My personal retort was that the current overall strategy being employed against the terrorists seemed akin to trying to empty a bath with a small can, while both taps were turned on full.

'Surely,' I argued, 'it must be better to turn off the taps or to at least reduce the flow, while still using the bucket to bail?'

I recounted the terrorists' casualty figure achieved by the Security Forces during June . . . a total of sixty. Against this figure, the Selous Scouts, using only a few soldiers, had killed forty six ZANLA terrorists inside Mozambique.

My suggestion to the Special Operations Committee (SOC), was that eighty percent of the Selous Scouts and all of the Special Air Service, should be immediately switched to external roles.

The men of the Special Air Service, were becoming frustrated at that time, because they were often being used on ordinary infantry tasks, including the manning of Fireforces which, to my mind, to their minds, and the minds of many other officers, was a gross misuse of expertise. Because of it, we lost many golden chances of wreaking havoc amongst the enemy in external base areas, which was the purpose for which the Special Air Service had been created.

The Special Air Service, understandably perhaps, became quite frustrated . . . even bitter . . . as they watched us carry out external operations which, to them, should have been their own personal preserve. In this, although they may not have appreciated it at the time . . . I, as a Special Force soldier . . . was one hundred percent in sympathy.

Finally, but much too late, I feel, they were switched to their proper role and tasked to carry out deep penetration external operations, which they did quite outstandingly. One of their soldiers becoming the second and last man to win the Rhodesian Grand Cross of Valour.

Operation Eland: Attack on Nyadzonya/Pungwe base: August, 1976

'Okay, so after your Tanzanian training was finished . . . what then?' the Special Branch Officer debriefing the captured terrorist asked.

'They sent me to the base on the Pungwe River.'

'Now wait a minute, go more slowly, give me it in more detail . . . where is this Pungwe base?'

'It is a very big ZANLA base in Mozambique . . .'

Increasing mention was being made by captures on interrogation, of them having been at ZANLA's big terrorist base on the Pungwe River . . . even amongst captured terrorists who hadn't been there, there were many who had heard of it. It appeared to be the main terrorist and logistics base for infiltration into the *Thrasher* operational area.

From the gradually pieced together information picture that began to take shape, it looked as if this Pungwe place was a pretty big base too, but it had been impossible to precisely pinpoint its location.

The information was passed over to the Rhodesian Air Force with a request for a photographic reconnaissance to be carried out by Canberra bomber, over the area of the Pungwe River, where the river bisected the main road from Chimoio to Tete.

'How'd you do?' we asked the Air Force routinely.

'Nothing at all . . . we've been photographing the whole area along both sides of the Pungwe River, and so far our photographic interpreters haven't come up with anything. Are you sure that it isn't a lot smaller than you've said . . . if it is just a small village being used as a base we wouldn't be able to pick it up for obvious reasons . . . the whole area is covered in villages.'

For weeks the Air Force continued their reconnaissance flights without finding it. Then, one day as Wing Commander *Randy* Durandt was flying an unrelated photographic mission over Mozambique, which he had to abort due to heavy cloud, he steered in the direction of the Pungwe River. Fourteen kilometres before the usual search area there was a break in the cloud, and the trained eye of the navigator picked out details of a large complex in the bush below . . . it

was what they had been looking for . . . he was certain of it. His finger depressed the button and the Canberra's cameras rolled . . .

Back at New Sarum the film was urgently processed . . . and the photographic interpreters picked up something highly interesting. Prints were made and blown up to many times their size . . . the results were electrifying.

There it was for all to see . . . the ZANLA base everyone had been diligently trying to locate . . . it was not on the Pungwe River at all but on one of its tributaries, the Nyadzonya River, some fourteen kilometres away from the Pungwe River.

When the Canberra bomber had passed overhead a muster had been in progress on the parade ground below and a large crowd was gathered around a dais. The camp covered a large area with numerous grass and pole huts, both round and in traditional barrack room shape.

The photographic interpreters carried out a head-count . . . there had been eight hundred terrorists on parade, which made it the largest single concentration of terrorists that had ever been seen in the war until then.

As soon as this visual evidence was to hand, both Major Brian Robinson, the Officer Commanding of the Special Air Service and I, were summoned before the Special Operations Committee and ordered to do a feasibility study on methods of mounting an attack on the Nyadzonya/Pungwe base.

It was made clear to both of us though, that the original limitations on cross-border operations into Mozambique still stood and would not under any circumstances be waived. Consequently, we were told, the attack had to be carried out in such a manner that no blame at all could be laid on the doorstep of the Rhodesian Government. The only air assistance we would get would be for casualty evacuation . . . but only in cases of very serious wounds.

It was a tempting target which both Brian Robinson and I would have loved to have tackled, but with the limitations, it was not viable.

Brian Robinson told the Committee that the air limitation imposed would render an attack by the Special Air Service impossible. The best chance would be to attack the base with paratroops, naturally lifting the paratroops out afterwards by helicopter . . . but this clearly had to involve the use of air support.

It was a difficult problem as the region between the Mozambique/Rhodesian border and the Nyadzonya/Pungwe terrorist base camp was a densely populated tribal area.

'And the Selous Scouts?'

I shook my head . . . the fact that I had black as well as white troops, made my chance of getting on the target a little better than the Special Air Service, but I didn't think we stood much hope of getting over the border and to the base . . . then getting back home after the attack without the benefit of air support.

Plans to attack the camp were temporarily shelved . . . there was no option as there was no immediate solution . . . nevertheless, the Air Force continued to photograph the Nyadzonya/Pungwe camp regularly to monitor its growth and . . . by all the reports it was growing in size all the time . . . there had to be at least a thousand terrorists there.

After Livisoni Musati had become completely compromised in the Inyanga area, he was sent to Bindura in mid June where Superintendent Mac McGuinness, in view of Livisoni's former ZANLA rank of Detachment Commander, personally carried out his in-depth interrogation as a matter of routine.

He provided a wealth of information, but the most important thing Mac learned was that he was familiar with the big terrorist base nearby the Pungwe river . . . the one we had been hearing about from captures . . . the one Wing-Commander *Randy* Durandt had air photographed by a stroke of luck.

'Yes, it is ZANLA's main logistics base for infiltration into the Eastern Districts – *Thrasher* Operational area . . . they have a big hospital there which houses a lot of *comrades* wounded inside Rhodesia and carried there for treatment . . . no, there are a lot more ZANLA terrorists based there than a thousand . . . I would say five thousand . . . at least!'

We were vitally interested and spent a lot of time after this with the Air Force Photographic Interpreters examining the results of the now regular photographic trips, which confirmed what Livisoni had told us . . . the numbers had increased to five thousand terrorists . . . at least.

We wanted to take out that base badly, but how to do it was still the problem.

We were still strung around with limitations . . . none of them had been lifted. No air . . . so not only couldn't we have air support, but we couldn't use Dakotas to parachute troops in, and neither could we go in by helicopter. We couldn't walk in and get away with it either, because of the dense population in the area. And . . . if we couldn't walk in we could hardly drive in . . .

It was at this time that we carried out the Mapai raid and its success made me realise the flying column concept was a real winner . . . properly handled there were few limits on the options open to us in Mozambique, particularly when taking into account our slow-reacting FRELIMO and ZANLA enemies.

As is always . . . will always be . . . the success of any Special Force operation depends almost entirely on achieving total surprise, brought about by a combination of boldness and a prior and detailed correct assessment of the enemy, his likely reactions . . . and . . . the speed at which he is likely to react.

I sent for Rob Warracker and told him he was to command a Nyadzonya/Pungwe column.

The column itself had to be compact by design and easily manoeverable too, so for these reasons I ordered it be comprised of eight vehicles which were to immediately assemble at Inkomo so any modifications or improvement to them . . . on the basis of lessons learned at Mapai . . . could be carried out.

The cover story given to the men who were to take part in the column was that we were going to take out Massangena . . . a small town sited to the south on the Sabi River.

Alan Lindner, our Intelligence Officer, was instructed to concentrate all his time on, and gather every scrap of intelligence he could on the Nyadzonya/Pungwe camp.

All *tame* terrorists, including Livisoni Musati, who was scheduled to play a major role in guiding in the attack, were concentrated at Inkomo Barracks and prolonged debriefing sessions became the order of the day, until all *tame* terrorists who had ever been at Nyadzonya/Pungwe, had been sucked dry of every fact they could remember about the place.

Using the quite considerable number of aerial photographs we had as a basis and incorporating all the human features we had gleaned, a table model of the camp and environs, made to scale from paper mache and plaster of Paris, was constructed. It showed the defences, the houses of the top commanders, the armouries, the hospital and who lived in which barrack block.

Side by side with this major and incredibly interesting task . . . watching the whole terrorist base come alive on a large table . . . we put together from *tame* terrorist and Special Branch sources, a pretty accurate facsimile of their general routine orders too. Ranking high in importance were the escape drills the inmates had been instructed to follow in the *unlikely* event of an attack by the Rhodesian Security Forces. Knowing the likely direction of flight in advance, enabled us to incorporate counter-measures in the attack plan, which would when the time came, prove fatal to some hundreds of terrorists.

The hospital, a large building made of poles cut from the bush and thatch . . . which was how most of the structures there were constructed . . . had provoked particular interest from the Special Branch, as it was where a large number of ZANLA terrorists who had been carried from Rhodesia for wound treatment after contact with the Security Forces, were housed. Our capture of these men, from an intelligence point of view, would clearly be of considerable value in assisting future operations inside Rhodesia.

I selected sixty five officers and men of the Selous Scouts, black and white, Territorial Army and regular, and ordered that they assemble at Inkomo Barracks on Monday, 12th July, at which time preparations for the coming operation would commence.

The value of our Territorial Army members, apart from their undoubted military abilities, quickly came to the forefront. They came from a wide cross-section of civilian backgrounds and brought with them a gratifyingly wide range of skills and abilities which would have been rare

in any one unit of regular soldiers alone. There were welders, mechanical engineers, design engineers, radio engineers and technicians, electronic experts ... you name them ... we had them.

Once they had arrived on call-up and had expectantly sniffed the wind, as it were, to see what was going on, they threw themselves wholeheartedly into the preparations along with our regular technicians and mechanics ... they took all the problems we gave them and solved them in their stride, then came up with others we had not dreamed existed, and solved them too.

Soon, from existing equipment not designed for such a wide purpose, a highly sophisticated radio network was installed throughout the column, giving every vehicle a high frequency facility and additional channels to allow rapid switch-overs for security purposes.

We were using five soft-skinned Unimogs and these too underwent a rapid transformation as armour plate was welded and bolted into place, to give the crews a minimum protection from small arms fire.

One all-vital area of concern was our strictly limited firepower. It had been a problem too on the Mapai column ... because of sanctions against Rhodesia and a critical shortage of foreign currency, we just didn't have a sufficiently wide range of guns for all purposes. There was no question about it ... our firepower didn't rate up to what was necessary to deal with what might be upwards of five thousand heavily armed terrorists ... even if we did take them by surprise.

On the Mapai column the heaviest armament had been a captured Russian 12,7 millimetre heavy machine gun mounted on one of the trucks, but the rest of the vehicles had been only sketchily defended by a single Belgian FN 7,62 medium automatic gun mounted on each vehicle. The ex-British Army Ferret armoured cars were fitted with their standard armament of thirty calibre Browning heavy machineguns.

For Nyadzonya/Pungwe we had to do better, so everybody put on their thinking caps and got to work improvising and experimenting with what we actually had to hand and not with what we would have liked to have had to hand. Working on this basis, it didn't take long before some of our Territorial Army members came up with an ingenious mounting for twin FN medium automatic guns, producing the devastating rate of fire of twelve hundred rounds per minute.

We had gone some way towards solving the problem, but the twin MAG's were still only adequate for use against soft-skinned vehicles or against infantry ... we still had nothing to use if we had to deal with sophisticated Russian armoured vehicles ... armoured personnel carriers or maybe even T-54 tanks, which rumour had it, were being brought in through the port of Beira and, according to intelligence reports, were being positioned in ever increasing numbers at Chimoio.

Then, like manna from heaven, the Rhodesian Air Force came to our rescue. A group-captain phoned us ... totally unexpectedly and certainly nothing to do with the raid, for I had not said a word to anyone ... and said that their grand old Vampire jet fighters ... which had certainly seen their day ... having been one of the first ever British jet fighters ... the first jet to fly the Atlantic ... had finally been grounded and scrapped.

Each, as it happened, had been equipped with twenty millimetre Hispano cannons ... the Air Force no longer had a use for them ... were we interested at all ... could we find a home for them?

There was no doubt about my answer to that one ... yes ... thank you ... we certainly could find a use for them. I hurriedly accepted their kind offer without needing to make explanations, and despatched transport to the Air Force base at New Sarum and took them over fast ... in case they changed their minds.

Our armourers, mechanics and everyone else licked their lips admiringly when they were unloaded, handling them with a loving care I am sure they had not been subjected to for many a long year.

They got to work, designing and putting mountings for them on two of the Unimogs and Brutus the Berliet ... they couldn't be fitted to more as the ammunition was heavy and the cannon itself bulky ... and the ammunition and guns jointly took up a lot of space and carrying

capacity, so those vehicles would only be capable of carrying a three man crew, a driver and two men to man the cannon.

For the same reasoning, the Unimogs scheduled to carry infantry, were only mounted with a single twin FN 7,62 medium automatic gun . . . and even the ammunition for that demanded a lot of space and weighed a lot . . . for the MAG didn't take long to fire off a thousand rounds.

With the addition of the cannons . . . which were devastating weapons to come up against . . . if you were unfortunate to be on the wrong side . . . we had in the way of heavy weapons one Unimog with the old faithful Russian 12,7 millimetre heavy machine gun, the Ferret armoured cars with their standard thirty calibre Brownings and another Unimog with a fifty calibre Browning.

Rehearsals commenced . . . but nothing was done to indicate what the target was likely to be, except for still giving the odd secretive hint that it would likely be Massangena.

These rehearsals, using ordinary vehicles to simulate the column ones which were still under the caress of the welder's torch while armourplate was fitted, became a daily event and Rob Warracker re-constructed various attack plans . . . a lot of them following layouts similar to the Nyadzonya/Pungwe complex.

The whole of Inkomo Barracks became a constant hive of expectant activity, with the Quartermaster tailors working long hours into the night, machining frantically against a dead-line I had given them, sewing very authentic-looking FRELIMO uniforms and their distinctive caps, while the Motor Transport Officer and his assistants were going over each column vehicle with a fine-toothed comb to minimise the chance of breakdowns . . . which was an ever present problem with the Ferret Armoured cars, which were tired old soldiers indeed.

The men adopted the finickiness of Rembrandt when lovingly painting their vehicles in the colours of the FRELIMO forces of Mozambique. They even added a final authentic touch, with pride, when Radio Intercept Services passed over some genuine FRELIMO registration numbers borrowed from vehicle strength returns being radioed from Chimoio to Maputo. Number plates of the exact dimensions . . . painted carefully in the exact red letters on a white background were made and fitted.

The route into the Nyadzonya/Pungwe base presented innumerable difficulties which we had not needed to face in Gaza Province.

To start with, the concentrations of FRELIMO troops along our eastern border . . . Manica Province in Mozambique . . . were far greater than the numbers we had been contending with in our south-west . . . Mozambique's Gaza Province.

A study of the map showed us there were four obvious ways we could go in . . . we were limited because we had to join a road system once in.

The shortest and most direct route was through the old Forbes' Border post just outside Umtali, which straddled the old main road and rail route from Umtali to Beira, and through which few Rhodesians had not passed on their way to the golden beaches of Beira in the good old free and easy days of the Portuguese era.

This entry point, which went between steep mountains, was now fenced, mined and guarded by a sizeable and well-armed FRELIMO contingent with good radio communications to Chimoio.

Well to the north of Umtali was the main tar road running from Salisbury to Mtoko to the Nyamapanda border post, and then on to Tete in Mozambique and Malawi beyond.

Inside Mozambique the road bisected the main tar road running south from Tete to Chimoio, parallel to Rhodesia's eastern border.

However, like Umtali, the Mozambique side of the Nyamapanda border post had also been landmined and fenced, and to this had been added a formidable sequence of artillery strongpoints which had been dug into a range of hills some ten kilometres deep inside Mozambique, which formed a natural defensive barrier dominating the road . . . so that route was not a plausible selection either.

South of Umtali, we had the choice of two entrances. The first was through the Cashel Valley,

which had a fairly substantial European and African population which might compromise our security and the second, was the border area opposite Espungabera where there was a large FRELIMO military base.

None of the routes in were ideal . . . in truth they were all far from ideal . . . and could all have made a fight at cross-border time inevitable, which was the last thing we needed for that would stir up ZANLA/FRELIMO reactions throughout the Manica Province.

While in Umtali on a routine visit I contacted an old friend of mine who ran a general store and cafe.

Alex once had sizeable land holdings in Mozambique which had been expropriated without compensation by FRELIMO, when the Portuguese had summarily tossed over control of the country. It had been bandied about Umtali for a long time that Alex's income had been handsomely augmented by his very central association with a smuggling ring which had, for a time, flourished in moving forbidden goods between Mozambique and Rhodesia.

If anyone knew of any unmarked cross-border bush routes into Mozambique, then, I reasoned, it had to be Alex.

I went to see him at his shop and, over a beer, broached the problem.

'Alex, you know the border like the back of your hand . . . do you know of any bush-roads bypassing the border post we could use to cross into Mozambique and get onto the main Umtali/Beira road inside Mozambique . . . or even better . . . are there any bush routes that would lead us to the Tete road?'

'What are you buggers planning?' asked Alex directly, giving me a long and quizzical look.

'Oh, nothing at the moment,' I said airily, 'we are just collecting detail on possible routes, in the event we have to send men in later to sabotage vital installations.' It was my turn to give him a long look. 'Incidentally, this conversation is highly confidential . . . just between you and me . . . all right?'

'Of course, Ron,' he hastened to assure me, 'I'm still in the Territorial Army and bound by the Official Secrets Act. I do know a route as it happens . . . I can even supply you a guide if you want one.'

'An African?' I asked.

'No . . . Portuguese guy . . . he used to manage my farm over the border in Mozambique.'

'Sounds good . . . well, you know . . . is he okay?'

'If I ask him to do something . . . he'll do it without a murmur . . . he's okay.'

'Maybe I can meet him . . . I'd like to . . . how about running up to the Joint Operational Command and showing me this road of yours on the map?'

At the *Thrasher* operations' room, Alex looked at the air photographs and maps and picked out the meandering path of a bush-track winding through the mountainous border country.

It started on a farm at Penhalonga, just north of Umtali, and wound through very hilly terrain until it linked up with the main Beira road at Vila de Manica.

This was an immediate problem as Vila de Manica is a fairly large town by Mozambique and even by Rhodesian standards, and a large garrison of FRELIMO troops was stationed there. If we used that route in, it meant we would have to pass through there . . . it was unavoidable . . . there would be a grave risk of our being compromised by the enemy seeing us . . . long before we reached the target. However, it was a possibility.

I returned to Inkomo and conferred with Rob Warracker who liked the idea.

I tasked Lieutenant Tim Hallows and Sergeant Amon to carry out a foot reconnaissance of the bush-track with Alex's man to check its suitability for vehicular traffic.

On the 15th July they passed back some bad news by radio . . . the place where it crossed into Mozambique was guarded by a section of eight FRELIMO soldiers.

We greeted this news with despondency . . . if we went that way we would have to kill or capture the whole section before attempting entry. How long would it take before they were missed and a hue and cry raised?

Then, the reconnaissance team's sitrep the next morning raised our hopes. The previous

evening the guards had left their position as soon as night had fallen, and trudged off to a village some kilometres away where they apparently spent the night.

Rob and I looked at each other, could this be their normal *modus operandi*? If it was . . . our way in was clear.

The next morning the report was identical . . . the FRELIMO lads had once again deserted their post to go to the village and get their heads down.

It was comforting to realise once again, that we were still warring in Africa.

The reconnaissance team was ordered to continue along the road into Mozambique checking on its condition in detail, while another team was sent in and given the task of monitoring the FRELIMO sleeping habits. They kept observation for a week and every night without failure, the FRELIMO collectively stretched their arms, yawned and headed back for bed at the village.

A week later the reconnaissance team reappeared.

'Yes . . . the road's bad in parts, but we reckon the column could get through.'

'That could save my piles from one helluva battering,' Rob Warracker said wryly.

He was referring to another route to the north, which had not been reconnoitred, but which I had suddenly remembered and was considering as another possibility, for I still did not much like the idea of the column having to pass through Vila de Manica as it would have to, if Alex's smugglers' route was used.

There were cut-lines of cleared bush in the Caponda area of northern Mozambique. They had mostly been the work of Rhodesian prospectors engaged on geological surveys for the big mining companies like Anglo American and others, and after the timbers and bush had been cut . . . to clearly demarcate the boundaries of the exclusive prospecting order areas granted to them by the Portuguese . . . they had been used as rough and ready roads by the prospectors.

They had been useable by four-wheeled drive vehicles when I had been on an operation there with the Rhodesian Light Infantry in 1971.

I could remember whole sections of them well . . . mostly heavily overgrown with re-growth . . . but the indigenous mopani trees had not, by then, re-grown to a size likely to hinder vehicles. I wondered what their present state was.

Studying aerial photographs, I saw the cut-lines criss-crossed each other in places, creating a danger of the column taking the wrong one and getting lost. But, if the navigation was done carefully . . . very carefully . . . it would be possible . . .

The nearest cut-line to Rhodesia, and thus the best one to use . . . commenced ten kilometres north of our border, thirty five kilometres west of Mkumbura. It ran north-east, cutting the Mague/Mkumbura road just south of Caponda. From there, another cut-line ran north-east which bisected the Mague/Chimanda road. After that, using some fairly good secondary roads, it would not be difficult to link up with the Tete to Chimoio road running north to south, which we could use to reach target.

Luckily, the area we would have to cross to get to the first cut-line was very thickly bushed and uninhabited, so security wouldn't be a problem. Nevertheless, it would still mean the column cutting a rough bush road north from the Rhodesian border until they met the cut-line.

Picks, shovels, winches and all the necessary tools with which to fill-in the innumerable dry river beds and dongas which abound there would be essential . . . and that was extra weight. The initial seventy to eighty kilometres would be tough and slow going indeed, but once the column reached the Mague road, the rest would be relatively plain sailing.

There were several advantages to this route, the first which has already been mentioned, was that because of the dense and uninhabited bush, security would create no problems. The second, was that once the column reached the main Tete to Chimoio road, it would be able to move totally during the hours of darkness, arrive at the Nyadzonya/Pungwe base at first light, mount the attack and be on their way back before FRELIMO got around to realising what had happened. Hopefully, their reactions would be too late to intercept us, also as the road inside Mozambique ran parallel to our border, it would not be too difficult to get near the border by

using one of the abounding bush tracks, and then getting our engineers to bull-doze a route back into Rhodesia, if the column struck serious difficulties.

The main disadvantage in taking this route would be the distance . . . which would be in the region of four hundred and fifty kilometres.

Rob Warracker was not keen to take this way, preferring Alex's way in, but I nevertheless made plans to send in a reconnaissance team to check it out . . . in case we needed it.

First though, there was a more pressing problem . . . the time had clearly arrived to go out and sell the idea to the Special Operations Committee. How this particular marketing exercise should be tackled was something I had thought about long and hard.

I had already faced it . . . getting approval for my planned raid was hardly going to be easy.

The routine in the first place, if I should send it through normal channels, would be for it to first go to the Special Operations Committee for scrutiny and prior approval . . . but, even if they did approve my plan, which was doubtful, that would certainly not be the end of things. For they would only add their recommendation, then pass it upwards to the Overall Co-ordinating Committee, from where, if they too recommended a go-ahead, it would gain altitude until it reached the rarified stratospheric atmosphere of the Central Intelligence Organisation, where any political implications and problems, actual, potential, or remotely possible, inherently lurking in the plan, would be painstakingly unearthed, examined and magnified until every problem was crystal clear . . . and everyone was so frightened out of their minds by them, that every vital advantage of the raid would be completely forgotten.

My experience . . . which I must admit had been considerably jaundiced by then . . . told me that as it was difficult enough to get an operation of a strictly conventional nature passed by the cautious incumbents of those various committees . . . then something as outrageously unconventional as a hit and run raid on the Nyadzonya/Pungwe terrorist base, stood little chance of getting the affirmative nod . . . particularly as there was a good chance of us becoming involved in a direct military confrontation with FRELIMO.

The good old Rhodesian Air Force though, would be quite a different kettle of fish, for generally their attitude towards new innovations, particularly bold Special Force operations, was refreshingly enthusiastic, and because of this, it became my practice later on to unofficially lobby them first, before laying plans before the Special Operations Committee.

In any case, I knew I was going to need a lot of allies, as I doubted the Special Operations Committee, the Central Intelligence Organisation or the Foreign Affairs Department, would even bother to argue about a raid on the Nyadzonya/Pungwe camp . . . they would more likely just turn my proposal down flat . . . and immediately too.

If, taking it as a long shot, they did, after considerable argument, allow it, then the operation would become so diluted and festooned with limitations, there'd be little point crossing into Mozambique in the first place.

I gave the matter a lot of thought . . . I had to stop the plan from getting tacky at a low level . . . for after that, the higher it got the tackier it would become.

Starting higher though?

Perhaps it was again the right moment to take sparing advantage of my right of direct access to General Walls . . . which for the record . . . I never exercised too often.

If I put my case directly to him and he added his weighty approval, then it was likely the other committees would fall obediently into line . . . even if they didn't really like the plan . . . for few men dared to gainsay or contradict General Walls on military matters, once he had dug in his heels and squared his jaw aggressively.

On Friday 23rd July, I telephoned General Walls at his home.

'I've been thinking of paying you a social visit, Sir . . . sort of come over and drink some of your beer.'

'What a pleasure, Ron,' said the General, 'I could do with an up-to-date personal rundown on what the Scouts have been doing . . . make it in about twelve days or so . . . I'm off on a trip outside the country for ten days . . . leaving the 26th.'

He was going away for ten days . . . on the 26th . . . which was in four days time, including the weekend . . . that was certainly something I hadn't bargained for. I desperately needed his support . . .

'It is important I see you before you go, Sir . . . it's one of those things, if you know what I mean?'

There was a thoughtful pause on the line.

'Well, tomorrow . . . that's not a terribly good day really . . . official engagement during the evening . . .'

'It shouldn't take too long, Sir . . . and it can't really wait until you come back from your trip . . . I'd like to bring Winston Hart too.'

'Winston Hart . . . I see . . . all right make it tomorrow at 15h00,' agreed the General.

The following afternoon Winston and I arrived at the General's house laden down with rolls of maps, bundles of air photographs and briefcases bulging with documents.

General Walls took all this in at a glance as he opened the door and invited us in. I could see by the look on his face that his hope for a quiet weekend was rapidly receding.

He opened some cold beers while Winston and I laid out the maps, keeping them down on the carpet with ashtrays and beer bottles. The air photographs were laid out in tactical patterns next to them.

Winston then opened the battle from the Selous Scout side with a briefing broadside of concise and extremely well researched intelligence on the Nyadzonya/Pungwe base, stressing not only its importance as a training base, but also its vital position as a central command and logistics centre for all terrorists entering or operating within the *Thrasher* operational area.

General Walls sat up abruptly when Winston mentioned close to five thousand terrorists . . . some fully trained and others in various stages of training . . . were based there. He added that at least two thousand of them were a mixture of hard-core terrorists recently withdrawn from the *Hurricane* operational area and freshly trained terrorists, who had recently been flown in from training bases in Tanzania . . . the others were the usual rag-tag and bobtail one would expect to find in any big ZANLA terrorist base.

Winston then continued and went on to say that according to information to hand, at least two thousand of the terrorists living there, were on the verge of deployment into Rhodesia and . . . if they were successfully deployed . . . thousands more would follow at regularly staged intervals. Because of this, it surely would be foolishness indeed not to crunch the whole ZANLA effort while it was concentrated and while we had the opportunity of causing them the most massively traumatic injuries.

Until that stage of the war, we in the Security Forces, had only spoken of terrorists in groups of four or eight . . . sometimes in terms of dozens . . . even fifty here and there . . . on the rare occasion a hundred . . . but never before, had we ever once spoken of thousands. I had no doubt at all that the figure of five thousand ZANLA terrorists in one camp in Mozambique had absolutely shaken General Walls . . . I could see by his face.

'I didn't know,' he said, 'no one has given me figures like that . . . I was told there were eight hundred or so at this Nyadzonya/Pungwe place.'

'That, Sir,' said Winston, 'was when the first air photographs were taken in May by *Randy* Durandt, but there has been a marked build-up since then.'

The General unconsciously commenced whistling through his teeth, which was a sure sign he was deep in thought and more than just a little concerned.

'Where did you get all this?' he asked.

Winston Hart told him about Livisoni Musati's fortuitous capture and what had been gained from him on interrogation. He then corroborated his story with more intelligence to hand, obtained from other captures and Special Branch sources.

General Walls was riveted by Winston's telling . . . the beer he had poured himself remained untouched . . . he hadn't even taken a sip.

'They are all in one place at the moment,' repeated Winston persuasively. 'Just take the

information we should get from the wounded terrorists in the hospital alone . . . they should be able to tell us where hundreds of groups can be located in the operational areas.'

Winston, unlike General Walls, paused to get some lubrication from his beer.

He then continued . . . giving the General an immaculately concise intelligence digest of what was happening on the ZANLA side . . . it was hard to resist . . . all three of us knew it.

'General, Sir,' I said taking over, 'the Mapai raid proved to everyone's satisfaction that an armed column, if used correctly and intelligently, has awesome potential, especially when used like a hammer against an unsophisticated enemy like FRELIMO or ZANLA. If we wish to come out on top in this business . . . we must exploit every enemy weakness and play up our own strengths to the maximum.

My own appreciation of the probable ZANLA or FRELIMO reactions, is that if we move against them unexpectedly and boldly . . . in areas and in situations which they least expect . . . by virtue of distance etcetera . . . we will take them by complete surprise and achieve results far out of proportion to the amount of effort we expend . . . we can inflict staggering casualties on them while they are still concentrated in their camps, with the absolute minimum likelihood of grief to ourselves.'

I paused, then continued insistently.

'I don't believe, Sir . . . and in my heart I know you don't either . . . that we have any other choice but to hit them now . . . and hit them hard. We cannot just sit idly by while there is a possibility . . . let alone a probability . . . that even two thousand more ZANLA terrorists are about to enter Rhodesia . . . to say nothing of another five thousand! If we allow them to leave that base . . . that *safe house* of theirs in Mozambique . . . and deploy into Rhodesia, then we will have a problem on our hands of an enormity we have never before had to face.

Internally, on the Selous Scout concept of operations, we are doing well . . . very well . . . but even if the Fireforces aim for a total of a hundred terrorist kills a month in the *Thrasher* operational area . . . which has rarely been done before . . . the terrorists, from a build-up point of view, will still be on the winning side . . . it will be the thin end of a very thick and ugly wedge to come.'

'You haven't come to me for idle chit-chat . . . what is your plan?' General Walls asked grimly.

'Sir, we have eaten, slept and dreamed about an attack on this camp for the best part of a month . . . there is not a tactical stone we have left unturned.'

For the next twenty minutes I outlined the possibilities offered by the various routes into Mozambique which our column could take, giving my reasons for rejecting all of them except for two alternatives on which I had not made the final decision.

I explained how if we went in through the *smugglers'* route, we would go east until we reached the Beira road's intersection with the Tete road, and then go north until we crossed the Pungwe River where we would turn off onto a dirt road and hit the Nyadzonya/Pungwe base . . . afterwards, the column would continue north until they could turn west and take a bush route across the border back into Rhodesia.

Similarly, if we chose the Caponda entrance into Mozambique, the column would, once it joined the Tete to Chimoio road, head south until short of the Pungwe bridge and turn off to the Nyadzonya/Pungwe base.

'Either way,' I stressed, 'it will be essential to isolate the target area from Chimoio afterwards, by dropping the Pungwe River bridge on the main Tete to Chimoio road to hinder any pursuit that FRELIMO might mount.'

General Walls looked at the map and nodded his agreement . . . it was clear the bridge had to go if we mounted the raid.

At the end of the briefing I made a particular emphasis.

'You will notice the route we will use to come out has not been physically reconnoitred . . . well, I'm afraid we cannot carry one out. It goes against the grain with me, but the area is densely populated and the risk of detection too high and if . . . even in the remote possibility, but I grade

the risks higher than this ... our reconnaissance team were spotted, it could later cause the death ... or, the even worse alternative ... the capture of every man in the column.'

'We must walk on tiptoe,' I went on to say, 'as we dare not excite the enemy even in the slightest ... it might attract more FRELIMO troops to the area. There is already at least a company present ... I think we stand a chance of bluffing our way past them, or fighting our way through them. But ... if there were sudden massive reinforcements to the area, it might well make all the difference between the column surviving or being annihilated.'

I paused, and both Winston and I looked at General Walls expectantly ... he was still whistling thoughtfully through his teeth.

'God, it's just one helluva risk!'

'Which is precisely why it will succeed, Sir,' I said. 'It is precisely the kind of job which Special Forces worth their salt are created for.'

'I'll be able to give you absolutely no air effort, you know,' warned General Walls.

It was a severe blow to my expectations ... I had banked on, at the very least, a Dakota doing a re-supply drop of ammunition after the attack, so the column could be freshened ... so they had a chance if they had to fight their way out.

'Does that go for casevac ... the movement out of casualties ... as well?' I asked pensively.

'No,' said General Walls firmly, 'I'll promise you that ... we'll make every effort to get the seriously wounded out.'

I nodded thoughtfully. Having gained one concession, I tried for more.

'Just say, Sir ... I'm not suggesting it will happen ... but looking at the worst ... what if we find ourselves deeply in trouble?'

'Well, Ron,' said the General, 'if it happens ... and I am confident enough in you to know that it won't ... but if you really do find yourselves with your backs to the wall ... I'll give you Hawker Hunter support ... but I want to be clear ... they will only be sent in as a very last resort.'

'Sir,' I agreed promptly grabbing his concessions with both hands, 'that's all right then ... can I assume you have given me the go ahead?'

General Walls shook his head ruefully.

'I'll have to get clearance first ... I'll go along with it, but as I mentioned, I'm flying out of the country on Monday ... I'll give John Hickman a briefing and tell him to push it through the Overall Co-ordinating Committee ... I'll make it quite clear I fully endorse your plan.'

Winston and I were still worried men after leaving the General's house ... certainly we were delighted with his positive reaction but ... we were worried sick that with him out of the country and thus unable to lend his personal support, the plan of attack would still be rejected.

Later, during the evening of Tuesday 27th July, a message came through that I was to be at Milton Buildings at 09h00 sharp the following morning.

The Overall Co-ordinating Committee (OCC), I knew, met each Wednesday.

The next day, promptly at 09h00, I was ushered into a sitting of the Special Operations Committee, who sat awaiting me in a large half circle. By the way they looked at me ... as if I might have dropped my breakfast down my uniform ... I sensed the atmosphere was about to become soundly uncongenial.

'We have just heard about this plan of yours to attack the Nyadzonya/Pungwe base,' said the chairman looking at me coldly.

'This bit here,' said the Deputy Director of the Central Intelligence Organisation, tapping a paper in front of him, 'you give the terrorist numbers there as five thousand ... where'd you get that? We certainly have no record of it ... bit of an exaggeration, I think ... last time we heard it was under a thousand.'

'I've got no more than that either,' confirmed the Officer Commanding, Special Branch.

It was clear they were getting blasé ... the eight hundred terrorists there had once worried them sick ... but now they were used to it ... a thousand didn't bother them ... although it as sure as eggs bothered me.

'The Overall Co-ordinating Committee will be meeting in an hour and your raid proposal is on the agenda,' continued the Chairman tersely. 'I have no wish to waste the time of the Overall Co-ordinating Committee on untested information . . . which clearly this is. Frankly, I fail to see why you didn't put it up through the usual channels so it could have been looked at . . . examined more carefully . . . instead of shortcutting by going directly to General Walls . . . shortcutting only wastes precious time in the end.'

I was astonished . . . totally astonished . . . and I said so.

'I can only say, gentlemen, I'm absolutely convinced that all the latest intelligence on the camp giving the up to date figures, has already been passed on to both the Central Intelligence Organisation and the Special Branch by Superintendent Mac McGuinness.'

'Well, I haven't seen it,' said the Deputy Director of the Central Intelligence Organisation. 'Quite certain . . .'

'It's hardly something we'd overlook,' agreed the Officer Commanding, Special Branch, 'five thousand terrorists gathered together in one camp!'

'May I use the telephone to call Mac McGuinness?' I asked.

The whole proposed operation was beginning to look as if it might crumble away to nothing, as I had feared.

'By all means,' said the Chairman cordially, but not bothering to hide his impatience, 'but do you mind being quick about it, please?'

I dialled Bindura and spoke to Superintendent Mac McGuinness.

'Do you remember the file . . . the big, thick file . . . the one you prepared on the in-depth interrogation of Livisoni Musati?'

'Hardly forget it,' said Mac.

'Who'd you send copies to? I'm with the Special Operations Committee, and none of them have heard of it.'

'Bull,' said Mac, 'it went to all normal addressees . . . Central Intelligence Organisation . . . Special Branch . . . sent it to them same time as I sent it to you . . . best part of a month ago.'

He gave me the reference number and date of the file which I copied down.

I put the telephone down and looked up.

'Well, gentlemen . . . as I am sure you have gathered . . . it certainly did go to you . . . you've had it for as long as I have . . .'

'I see,' said the Deputy Director of the Central Intelligence Organisation, clearly embarrassed, 'must look into that . . . anyway . . . well . . . perhaps you could give us a rundown . . . just the bones.'

I spoke for the next ten minutes, giving them the latest outline of the happenings relating to the Nyadzonya/Pungwe base . . . answering questions as I went and illuminating my points with maps and the latest aerial photographs.

'Well, I don't know,' said one of the committee members doubtfully, 'shouldn't we check it out some more?'

'Bit dodgy, I say,' said another, looking about him . . .

'Imagine the trauma we would have to face in the United Nations if they turned out to be refugees?' murmured one of them who clearly suffered from chilblains.

'They could easily be too,' nodded the second speaker.

I did not need a degree in psychology to gather the concensus of the Special Operations Committee, was leaning its weight against accepting the clear-cut evidence which had been finely prepared and laid out before their eyes.

It was easier . . . safer . . . less likely to drop anybody . . . *particularly themselves* . . . if they mutually agreed to do nothing . . . adopt the good old wait and see attitude.

'There are no further ways possible of checking this out, gentlemen,' I said firmly. 'It would be ridiculous if we didn't rely on this very good intelligence. Sure, I know it indicates a terrorist base far larger in size and broader in scope than anything we have ever come up against before . . . but its sheer size does not mean the information hasn't been checked, cross-checked and double

checked . . . because it certainly has. The only thing left to do to confirm its veracity would be to send in a reconnaissance team, but in the circumstances, I would consider that irresponsible . . . as it would, in all likelihood, compromise all possibilities of a raid . . . we could lose this marvellously golden opportunity of striking ZANLA and doing them serious injury, which we now hold in both our hands!'

The Chairman glanced at his watch, then shuffled his papers . . . others shuffled their feet.

'You'd better hang around until the Overall Co-ordinating Committee have finished their meeting, Ron,' he said. 'I think it probable they'll want to speak to you personally.'

I waited around impatiently . . . would they . . . wouldn't they?

At 10h30 I got the summons to enter the conference room where the Overall Co-ordinating Committee was meeting.

All the big-wigs were there . . . the Commissioner of Police, the Commander of the Air Force, Lieutenant General John Hickman deputising for General Walls, the Director of the Central Intelligence Organisation, the Officer Commanding, Special Branch, and the head of Foreign Affairs, the Chairman of the Special Operations Committee. A Lieutenant Colonel sat to one side taking minutes.

'Ron,' said General Hickman, 'we've been discussing your plan and would like to hear from you personally . . . particularly the up-to-date intelligence picture relating to it.'

I started from the beginning with those first odd snippets of information which had started to filter in a few months beforehand, and then switched to the frustrating air search for the camp which had been thought to be in the immediate area of the Pungwe River. I then reminded them how, as luck would have it, Wing Commander *Randy* Durandt flying a Canberra on photographic reconnaissance, had chanced upon the camp quite fortuitously, and how an enlargement of that first photograph had reaped a bonanza head-count of eight hundred ZANLA terrorists on parade.

I then mentioned how both Major Brian Robinson of the Special Air Service and I had reluctantly concluded we couldn't handle it . . . although the Special Operations Committee had wanted us to . . . and how regular aerial photography had been conducted since then as a matter of routine . . . and . . . how a steep upward climb in the numbers of terrorists there had been logged by the Air Force Photographic Interpretation Section.

Finally, I turned to Livisoni Musati and the rich haul of fresh and corroboratory intelligence we had gathered in long sessions of interrogation.

Having left no intelligence stone unturned, relating to the camp itself, I switched calmly to the likely effects upon Rhodesia that large-scale infiltrations of terrorists would have if we just stood aside and left the Nyadzonya/Pungwe base to its own devices. Was it better to wait until they actually came into the country in small groups and be faced with the task of hunting them down? Or, was it preferable hitting them while they presented a collectively large target at one central location?

'Gentlemen,' I said, 'I would like to say this in conclusion. We have been presented with an opportunity of a life-time and if we fail to grasp it with both hands . . . as we must grasp all other opportunities which are sure to follow this one . . . then as sure as night follows day, we are going to lose this war.'

There was no doubt in my mind I had won over the Air Marshal . . . his fingers were drumming the table in front of him, as if he was fingering the gun-button of his old Spitfire.

'Thank you, Ron,' said General Hickman formally, without betraying his feelings in the matter, 'that will be all for now. I'll telephone and give you an answer later.'

I saluted and left the conference room with a feeling of elation . . . in spite of some agonising doubts . . . I was somehow sure I had swung the deal.

'What's it to be, Sir?' asked Rob Warracker, also in an agony of suspense, as I walked into the Inkomo operations room.

I shook my head. 'I can't really say . . . but I think it's going to be *go*, Rob . . . General Hickman said he would telephone me when the meeting was finished.'

At last, at 12h30 a telephone jangled stridently ... it was the secrophone. I picked up the hand-set, my hand shaking with excitement.

'Okay, Ron,' said General Hickman, 'you've got the go ahead ... but the limitations outlined by General Walls still apply.'

'What about the bridge, Sir ... can we blow it?'

'The bridge?' he said clearly startled, 'what bridge?'

'The Pungwe Bridge.'

'That wasn't brought up at all ... why do you need to blow that, it could be classed as an economic target ...'

'Sir,' I said with considerable anxiety, very conscious of the worried look on Rob Warracker's face, 'we must blow the Pungwe Bridge ... we must do that to stop a follow-up. Do you know what strengths the FRELIMO have at Chimoio, Sir? It is absolutely vital ... can't you speak to the committee while their agreeing mood lasts.'

'Okay, Ron,' said General Hickman resignedly, 'I can't promise you anything, but I'll do my best.'

The atmosphere lay tense in the operations room ... every man who'd had anything at all to do with the planning knew how important it was to take out the Pungwe Bridge ... it would likely be the crucial factor during the exfiltration phase ... I had nightmare visions of the column being trapped ... because of the rapid intervention by an armoured column advancing from Chimoio ... their way clear because the bridge was still standing ... and some more tanks from Tete ... the lads could end up as the sandwich filling between two pieces of armoured bread.

The telephone rang and I grabbed it ... it was General Hickman.

'Okay, Ron,' he said briskly, 'blow your bridge ... but by God you owe me a beer ... I've talked myself hoarse ... and by the way ...'

'Yes, Sir?'

'Good luck.'

'Thank you, Sir,' I said with feeling.

I replaced the telephone and looked around the operations room and caught Rob's eye. We grinned at each other.

'Robbie,' I said not bothering to hide my excitement, 'it's going to work. I *know* it's going to work. I can feel it in my bones and ... when I get that feeling, I am never wrong.'

Having achieved all this, I detailed Sergeant Major Anthony White, Sergeant Brierson (a Territorial Army soldier) and Sergeant Dabudu, a short wiry Shona, to carry out the reconnaissance of the Caponda route.

Their task was to walk the whole of the proposed route to the Mague/Chimanda road and provide me with a feasibility report on their return.

They were deployed by helicopter at 17h00 on 30th July, and set down some ten kilometres inside Mozambique near where the first cut-line began.

There was a water problem which was why it was uninhabited ... no standing water was available there at all during the dry season.

It was clearly impossible for the reconnaissance team to carry enough water with them to last the trip, so a drum was cached at the half-way point from where they could reprovision themselves both on the way in, and again on their way out.

By walking during the cooler times of the day and for most of the night hours while there was moonlight, Anthony White and his men satisfactorily completed their task, covering a total map-distance, on the round trip, of one hundred and twenty kilometres through very thick bush and rough country.

Even in spite of the water cache which had been laid on for them, the last part of their return journey was touch and go, and they were compelled to dig for water-bearing bulbs to augment their slender rations. Taking into consideration the heat, the terrain and their carefully eked-out water rations, it was a very fine effort indeed.

They called for and were uplifted by helicopter on the evening of the 3rd of August, returning to Inkomo on the 4th.

When I met them for a debrief, I saw that Sergeant Dabudu was hobbling badly, his legs held painfully apart. I asked what was the matter, and he shook his head ruefully.

'*Ishe,* if you ever wish to give me another job like that one . . . please don't send me with those two . . . look at them . . . I had to run almost the whole way to keep up!'

Both Anthony White and Sergeant Brierson were well over six feet in height . . . but the luckless Sergeant Dabudu was only just over five.

Their report was positive . . . the route was suitable for four-wheeled drive vehicles . . . and the area was totally uninhabited and not patrolled by FRELIMO.

Now we had a proper appreciation of both routes, Rob and I got down to weighing up the pros and cons of which one to use. On balance Rob still preferred the route in through Penhalonga, even though it meant passing through Vila de Manica . . . it was shorter too . . . so we finalised on the *smugglers'* route.

I decided that the time had come to brief those going with the column, in detail . . . time was running out and the finer points of the plan needed a lot of rehearsing, so I called for all officers and non-commissioned officers, holding key positions in the proposed attack, to assemble in the tin shack serving as the Intelligence Office.

Alan Lindner and his staff had done a superb job. They had built scale models . . . prepared blow-ups of air photographs complete with stickers and name tabs, giving the complete layout. Perhaps their best effort was a home put-together three dimensional slide of the whole camp area which was shown on an epediascope.

About forty Selous Scouts were squeezed into the Intelligence Office, where Alan gave his intelligence briefing. It was fairly lengthy and, of course, involved details of the camp layout.

The men listened intently and in absolute silence . . .

After Alan had finished I took over. I commenced the briefing and again silence prevailed until I had given the mission . . . told them the target . . . and how we were going to hit it.

'Christ,' I heard one mutter, 'the Old Man's been at the Captain Marvel comics again!'

I finished my briefing . . . I paused for a few moments and looked them over proudly. I had no doubt they could do it.

'Chaps,' I said, 'I know this looks like *Mission Impossible* . . . but it's not . . . this is what Special Forces are all about . . . that is why you are in the Selous Scouts . . . it's going to work . . . I know it's going to work . . . you will achieve complete surprise . . . utter surprise, and if things go well . . . you will kill one hell of a lot of terrorists.'

I then handed over to Rob Warracker to give them his detailed orders.

Inkomo hummed for the next few days as everyone threw their shoulders to the wheel with an unsurpassed willingness . . . checks were made . . . practices carried out . . . rehearsals repeated until things were as near perfect as possible . . .

One of the best things about volunteer troops of the high calibre we had in the Selous Scouts, was that they needed little shouting at or chasing. If something was not right, all that was needed was a good-humoured leg pull to get them sharply back into line.

I noticed suddenly that the column had somehow expanded . . . sure, we had acquired three more Ferret Armoured Cars . . . bringing the total accompanying the column to five . . . and four more Unimogs . . . bringing the total to nine . . . but those I knew about. They were to carry the additional firepower together with the necessary and very weighty ammunition supplies to feed the guns.

I had really felt sorry for the Commanding Officer of the Armoured Car Regiment who had donated his precious Ferrets to the Scouts . . . although strictly under protest . . . and, when we took delivery of them, he looked as if he'd had all his teeth pulled.

It was in the area of personnel going on the operation where there was the most expansion in strength . . . there seemed at least a third more people rehearsing than I had planned for.

'Sir,' Rob Warracker said when I taxed him about it, 'I can't stop them . . . it's the Territorial

SELOUS SCOUTS' TRAINING CAMP
WAFA WAFA WASARA WASARA

13. *Top left: That* baboon – another hairy eating experience.

14. *Top right:* Chew well before swallowing.

15. *Left:* The worst thing about eating raw liver – is eating raw liver.

16. Spacious kitchens and dining area . . .

17. Comfortable barrack blocks . . .

OPERATION LONG JOHN - ATTACK ON MAPAI AND CHICUALACUALA: JUNE, 1972

18. A Boer War idea resuscitated to use for reconnaissance into Mozambique, which didn't work because the tracks of Mozambique railways were poorly ballasted.

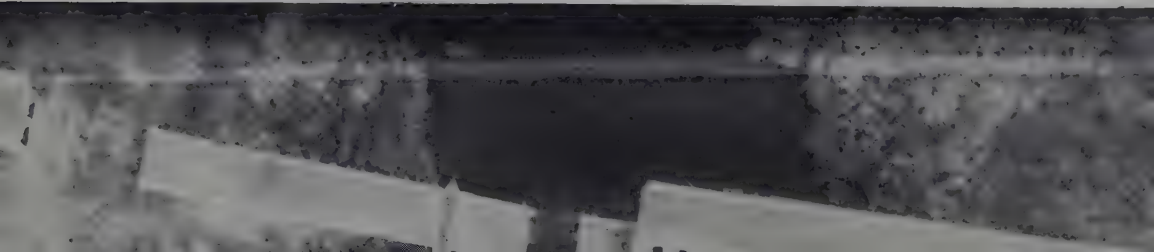
19. Brutus the captured Berliet.

OPERATION ELAND

20. Nyadzonya/Pungwe ZANLA terrorist base as photographed by a Canberra bomber mid 1976. A head-count showed eight hundred terrorists were on parade.

21. Eland – Nyadzonya/Pungwe ZANLA terrorist base as photographed by a Canberra bomber after it had been struck and devastated by a Selous Scouts' flying column on the 9th August, 1976. Hundreds of bodies can be picked out by using a magnifying glass.

22. Eland – The Pungwe bridge after being dropped by Rob Warracker to stop FRELIMO or ZANLA pursuit.



23. Map of Nyadzonya/Pungwe terrorist base captured during the Selous Scouts' raid.

24. Map based on terrorist map showing Selous Scouts' deployment on entering base.

OPERATION MARDON

25. and 26. *Top and right:* Home-made armoured car – the *Pig*. Armed with 20mm Hispano canon taken from old Vampire jet fighters.

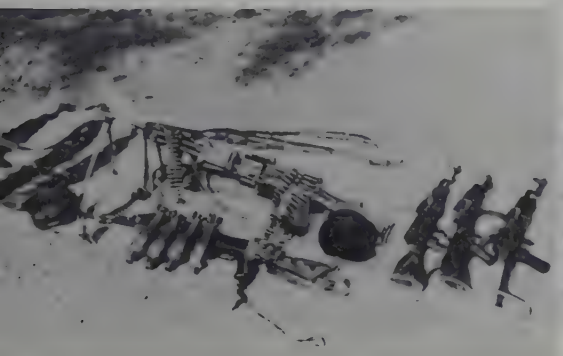
27 *Below:* Unimog armed with twin 7,62 MAG's on home-made mounting.

28. *Below right:* Chigamane terrorist base burns as the Selous Scouts leave.

OPERATION IGNITION

29 and 30. Operation Ignition – Soviet supplied *holiday luggage*. Turning the tables, the Scouts bit the biter by blowing up ZIPRA HQ, Francistown, with them. November, 1976.

31. *Below:* Enemy arms caches and more enemy arms caches.



32. Mkumbura – a well-known *holiday resort* for the Rhodesian Security Forces.

33. and 34. Press visit to Selous Scouts, March, 1977, Tracking and *more* tracking.

Army guys . . . the word that something is on has leaked out, and they are calling themselves up and snivelling their way into the column . . . every day I get a few more.'

I sternly called for a nominal roll of those going and found the numbers had jumped from sixty five to eighty four.

But I . . . like Rob Warracker, was an old softie sometimes too . . . in spite of the grumbling noises I made, I didn't have the heart to kick them off . . . but I firmly ordered the list to be finally closed . . . before I had the whole of the Selous Scouts involved.

The timings for the operations had caused many headaches. We had to achieve a balance . . . the troops had to arrive at the target sufficiently fresh to be at their best for the attack . . . but also to be fresh enough afterwards to fight their way back to Rhodesia, should the need arise.

We also had to be most careful with our security precautions too, for any lapse in that area, once we set the date and time, could easily spell disaster.

As planned, an advance party left Inkomo early on Saturday the 7th August, for a relatively uninhabited area near Penhalonga and adjacent to the Mozambique border, to set up a field kitchen and a fuel staging point.

Then, during the day, Brutus . . . the Berliet . . . which had been intended as the command vehicle . . . broke free from a transporter and was damaged sufficiently to make it unserviceable. The only vehicle immediately available to replace it, was another Unimog . . . mounting only a twin FN 7,62 medium automatic gun . . . but there was no other suitable alternative.

At last light, on the same day, the main body of the column drove through the gates of Inkomo Barracks and headed for Penhalonga, where it arrived, without further hitches or incidents, at 03h00. As soon as they arrived the men bedded down . . . they were going to need all the sleep they could get.

The next day, Sunday the 8th August, was spent making final adjustments, on inspections, feeding and, for the fortunate ones who could . . . sleeping!

D-Day . . . the day of the attack . . . had been the subject of much debate, conjecture and discussion. We knew . . . from Special Branch sources . . . that Sunday the 8th August, had been declared a ZANLA holiday and . . . lengthy celebrations including hours of endless speeches . . . were bound to result.

Problem was . . . we didn't just want to kill the rank and file terrorists . . . and there was a more than fair chance the commanders would be away attending similar functions elsewhere . . . more flesh-potty perhaps than Nyadzonya/Pungwe . . . like Chimoio . . . or Tete.

We had missed the commanders in the Mapai raid for the same reasons. We were aware though that the commanders didn't make a habit of staying away for long . . . they would be back by the next day at the very latest. For this reason we set D-Day for Monday the 9th August . . . when . . . with any luck . . . we'd get the whole lot.

We had established their camp routine . . . a huge muster parade took place at 08h00 daily, when almost every inmate there, excluding the cooks and the hospital staff, were compelled to attend roll call. It was useful information to know and made the time of the attack easy to select . . . 08h10 was when we planned to drive the column into the base.

If all things were equal, then well over brigade strength of ZANLA terrorists would be standing on the parade ground, hopefully in close order and ready for annihilation . . . instead of for inspection as they anticipated . . . when the Selous Scouts arrived to liven up their day.

Rob Warracker, to my concern, because I felt he needed sleep . . . spent the whole morning of Sunday the 8th July, re-checking his calculations for the explosives needed to demolish the Pungwe Bridge . . . checking and re-checking them worriedly . . . to see if there was enough at the Penhalonga harbour. Finally, to my relief, he decided everything was okay and left to join the column, arriving just before last light.

At about this time a small foot patrol crossed the border to cut all telephone lines linking habitations in the area of the crossing point to the town of Vila de Manica.

The column, by this time comprising ten Unimogs and four Ferret armoured scout cars . . .

one Ferret had broken down at the last moment . . . and eighty-four officers and men . . . drove out in column and made for the track by which they were going to cross. The order of column was –

1	Lead vehicle	Unimog armed with a twenty millimetre Hispano cannon, carrying Sergeant Clive Mason and a crew of two.
2	Command vehicle	Unimog armed with twin Belgian FN twin 7,62 medium automatic guns. Carrying Rob Warracker, a gunner, a Portuguese interpreter and a Shona interpreter.
3	Second in Command's vehicle	Unimog armed with one twenty millimetre cannon. Carrying Lieutenant Tim Hallows the second in command, Willie van der Riet and another soldier.
4	Callsign – Tango-1	Ferret armoured car armed with a thirty calibre Browning, commanded by Captain Malley and carrying Paul Holton.
5	Callsign – Tango-2	Ferret armoured car armed with a thirty calibre Browning, commanded by WO-2 Anthony White.
6	Callsign – Tango-3	Ferret armoured car armed with a thirty calibre Browning, commanded by John Fletcher.
7	Callsign – Tango-4	Ferret armoured car armed with a thirty calibre Browning, commanded by Colin Lowe, with Chris Gough as driver.
8		Unimog armed with a fifty calibre Browning, commanded by Piet van der Riet.
9		Unimog mounting a 12,7 millimetre Russian heavy machine-gun, commanded by Chris Robins.
10		Unimog with a trailer for mortar ammunition armed with twin FN 7,62 medium automatic guns, and carrying one eighty one millimetre mortar, commanded by Sergeant Bruce Fitzsimmons and carrying infantry.
11		Unimog with a trailer for mortar ammunition armed with twin FN 7,62 medium automatic guns, and carrying one eighty one millimetre mortar, commanded by Sergeant Major Peter McNeilage and carrying infantry.
12		Unimog – closed in vehicle carrying explosives – driver plus one man.
13	Callsign – Romeo – 1	Unimog armed with twin FN 7,62 medium automatic guns, commanded by Sergeant Major Ben Botha and carrying infantry.
14		Unimog armed with twin FN 7,62 medium automatic guns, which was part of Ben Botha's callsign and carrying infantry.

At 00h05 the lead Unimog lumbered over the border into Mozambique . . . the FRELIMO guard detachment, as had been anticipated . . . were conspicuous by their absence.

Both vehicles and men were heavily disguised as FRELIMO, the European element wearing balaclava woollen helmets pulled well down over their faces to disguise their features.

Sergeant Gombeni was in the command Unimog, sitting next to the tall and rangey corporal of Portuguese extraction . . . whom we had borrowed from the Special Air Service to assist with *special tasks* . . . by speaking Portuguese when the need arose.

Corporal Rodrigues, clutching a loud hailer in front of him . . . made no secret of his opinion that the operation was just about the craziest exercise he had ever been caught up in, and he constantly shook his head and speculated on how many of them would be lucky enough to get back to Rhodesia alive.

The line-cutting party which was waiting by the road just over the border was up-lifted . . . no one would be telephoning Vila de Manica for a while.

Good time was being made . . . the column, rolling along easily in the bright moonlight, showed only their parking lights so vehicles could keep their convoy distances. Then,

unexpectedly, calamity ... which always hovers lightly above the shoulder of a soldier... struck.

Captain Malley, our Motor Transport Officer, who had begged, as an ex-cavalryman, to drive one of the Ferret armoured cars ... Callsign Tango-1 ... missed a small but nevertheless fairly high ... and certainly vital bridge, because his vision was obscured by the rolling dust clouds raised by the moving column. One moment the Ferret was trundling along the road and the next it was upside down in the river bed.

By a particular miracle, neither of the two crew members were hurt ... although Malley's honour as a cavalryman was slightly bruised ... and the gunner, Paul Holton, was devastated by being unable to recover a bottle of Scotch whiskey he had illicitly brought along for celebrations after the raid, which was trapped in a bin.

Specific orders had been laid down to cater for such an eventuality ... for we had prepared orders for every eventuality ... or at least, we had thought we had.

... and, if a vehicle breaks down and cannot be towed ... it will be blasted beyond recognition ... unfortunately, it was an order which had been easier to lay down than it was to achieve.

I was prowling anxiously around the operations room at Inkomo when Rob's callsign came up on the radio and asked for me.

His signal came through at little more than strength-2 ... I was hardly able to make him out.

After a lot of repeats I got the message ... a Ferrett ... Tango-1 ... had turned over and was wrecked.

'Blast it,' I ordered tersely.

'Negative ... negative,' came the reply almost drowning in a river of static.

Finally, after many frustrating attempts, I got the drift of what had happened. I looked at the map and realised we were in trouble ... they couldn't blast the car for it was too close to Vila de Manica. If they set off an explosion the FRELIMO would come running from everywhere ... and if the column hung around much longer, it would throw out the timings and compromise the entire operation.

I ordered Rob to strip the vehicle of equipment and carry on ... we would have to take up the slack later.

It was an unreal ... almost eerie sensation ... sitting glued to the radio set back at the Inkomo operations room, listening to disjointed conversation snatches between vehicles as pre-nominated teams dismounted and snipped the telephone lines prior to the column driving into Vila de Manica.

The time was 02h00.

The column rumbled through the town, following where possible, a back street route. A number of FRELIMO sentries were seen at various points in town but few civilians were abroad. Luckily, those who were, including the FRELIMO sentries, paid scant attention to the column, which actually passed within a metre or so of a sentry box where the FRELIMO guard was fast asleep, and from which drifted an overpoweringly strong smell of dagga ... marijuana.

Once safely out of town ... the telephone line-snipping drill was repeated and telephone communications to Chimoio, the main FRELIMO base in the Manica Province, rendered useless. Then to discourage any thought of a morning follow-up, mines were sewn in the road.

Continuing east, still making good time, they soon reached the village of Vanduzi which they quickly passed through. From there they turned north, joining the main tarmac road leading to Vila Gouvea and then on to Tete.

At 03h30 ... well up to time ... they reached an area some kilometres past the Pungwe Bridge, where they pulled off the road into the bush, the men taking the opportunity to sleep while they could, until they readied to move out again at first light.

Meanwhile, back at Inkomo, I was making frantic efforts to get someone to go across the border and recover the wrecked Ferret, so Rhodesia could still afterwards deny having had anything to do with the raid.

Firstly, I had telephoned the *Thrasher* operations room at Umtali so as to speak to the

Brigadier . . . before I could, I had to blast a dozy subaltern which did nothing to improve my temper.

'Sorry, Sir,' he had said firmly. 'It doesn't sound a very good trick to waken the Brigadier at this time of night.'

Good trick or not, I soon got him on the line in the early hours and outlined the basic problem.

'Well, what do you want me to do?' he enquired apparently nonplussed.

'Sir,' I said, 'we can't leave the Ferret there . . . it'll have to be moved back to Rhodesia. May I suggest you put in an infantry party and set some eighty one millimetre mortars to cover the ground ahead of the armoured car. Then, send the Service Corps in with a crane to haul it out of the river bed. If you can get things moving, you should have it back in Penhalonga by 10h00 at the latest.'

'I wouldn't think so, Ron . . . we'll have to sweep for mines first,' said the Brigadier doubtfully.

'Sir,' I said getting exasperated, 'our column has just gone through and . . . once the FRELIMO based in Vila de Manica realise with a shudder what has passed through their town during the night, they are not going to rush out anywhere spoiling for a fight. They're going to be shit-scared . . . and will spend all day tomorrow digging trenches . . . bloody big trenches they'll be able to hide in.'

But it made no difference . . . the Brigadier was adamant.

I phoned Army Headquarters and asked the Duty Officer to phone General Hickman . . . explaining, as I had already done with the Brigadier, what needed to be done. It was clearly time for me to bow out . . . I didn't have the rank . . . it was better for Army Headquarters to take a hand and sort things out at a higher level.

According to our intelligence, a re-supply column of FRELIMO vehicles from Chimoio went to the terrorist base each Monday morning about muster time. The plan was to wait until they came . . . tag on behind and hopefully follow them into the base, in the hope the guards on duty at the entrance barrier would assume the Scouts were part and parcel of it, and just wave them through.

The FRELIMO vehicles had not materialised by 07h00 . . . waiting any longer would have made the column late . . . so Rob decided to press on . . . taking and playing opportunities by ear as they came up . . . and they pulled back onto the main road, and continued north.

Ahead of them in the distance a grey Land-Rover suddenly appeared from a side road, turned and headed away from them as the column slowed.

It had come from the Nyadzonya/Pungwe base . . . Livisoni Musati confirmed it. But had they seen the column approaching . . . no, don't think so . . . doubtful in fact.

Looks like we missed someone big, Rob thought. Rex Nhongo was supposed to have a Land-Rover like that.

They paused until the way was clear and then carried on, turning down from the main tar road onto the dirt track . . . this was it, they were on the last stretch to the base, ten maybe thirteen kilometres to go.

Three kilometres further on, the convoy dipped into the dried-up bed of a stream scattered randomly with bolders wedged in the sand. The convoy slowed to virtually zero speed to get through . . . ideal ambush site.

Romeo-1 . . . Roadblock-1, Sergeant Major Ben Botha's callsign of two Unimogs, each with their twin MAG's with six thousand rounds of ammunition each, plus the closed-in Unimog carrying the explosives, left the column to take up ambush positions . . . Ben and the twelve men remaining with him looked enviously at the tail-end of the convoy as it carried on up the road towards the terrorist base.

They would have all the fun . . . but someone had to cover the rear to ensure the column was safe from surprise attack.

The column, now comprising seven Unimogs and three Ferret armoured cars, carried on up the road towards the terrorist base . . . nothing could stop them now.

At the Nyadzonya/Pungwe base things were not going according to the plans of the ZANLA commanders there, as the festivities for the holiday on Sunday 8th August, had not been completed. So, with a splendid logic and an admirable flexibility of mind, the Commanders had declared Monday 9th August, to be an additional holiday, so the unfinished programme of songs, plays and traditional dancing could be completed.

At 08h25 the head of the column reached the entrance to the camp.

There were six ZANLA guards at the gate who normally, would have been accompanied by two FRELIMO soldiers with the responsibility to scrutinise all movement orders – *gia de marche* . . . prior to allowing any person or vehicle to enter the camp.

The two FRELIMO soldiers had apparently been at the gate earlier that morning, as was their duty, but later, probably because they tired of hanging around, they had left their posts and returned to their barracks.

This was fortunate for us, for as the inexperienced ZANLA guards hesitated about lifting the boom, Sergeant Rodrigues, his balaclava pulled well down over his face, screamed a torrent of abusive Portuguese at him.

The guard, jumped to it as if by reflex, and raised and held the boom up to allow the column to pass through into the Nyadzonya/Pungwe camp.

We had devised two alternate plans of action, once the column was safely inside.

Plan 'A' hinged upon all the terrorist residents of the camp being mustered on the parade ground and a general air of normality prevailing. If this was the position, the vehicles would split up after entering the camp and proceed without ceremony to preselected tactical positions around the camp, the armoured cars covering the escape routes the terrorists had been instructed to take in the event of attack.

The command Unimog . . . would stop in front of the parade and Sergeant Rodrigues, pretending he was a high FRELIMO official visiting from Chimoio, would address the parade in Portuguese, which Sergeant Gombeni would translate into Shona.

The text of Sergeant Rodrigues' speech which had been prepared in advance, was as follows:

'First of all, I appeal to you all to stand absolutely still in your present positions, for there is something of extreme importance I have to say.

We, the FRELIMO, have always stressed our solidarity with your struggle, and we regard your struggle as our struggle. For this reason, we have always been anxious that ZANLA should remain unified and so preserve its strength. But regrettably, I must tell you that the enemies of the revolution have entered the ranks of ZANLA, and we have been advised that a plot to overthrow the established ZANLA High Command has been uncovered.

And that is the reason why we are here today.

I am going to call out some names, and the people called should make their way quietly to the back of my vehicle.

This does not mean you stand accused, on the contrary, if your conscience is clear you should come willingly, for surely, you are guiltless.

The people whose names are read out will be taken to Chimoio where they will be investigated by a Board, consisting of high-ranking ZANLA and FRELIMO commanders. The following will now step forward . . .'

Sergeant Rodrigues, with Sergeant Gombeni interpreting, would then read out a list of names who, *coincidentally,* just happened to be the names of every commander and terrorist of consequence believed to be in the camp.

As each man reached the rear of the command Unimog, he would be handcuffed with plastic handcuffs . . . the column had large quantities with them . . . and shoved inside where he would be leg-ironed to the vehicle.

Once this had been achieved, hopefully without incident, the order would be given for the column to open fire, eliminating the maximum numbers of terrorists possible in the process. Thereafter, the camp would be destroyed by fire and explosives and the column driven home to Rhodesia.

Plan 'B' was designed for a more fluid situation or, if a firefight broke out. All vehicles would still proceed with all possible speed to their pre-designated positions within the camp, but then, on being given the order by Rob on the radio, firing would immediately commence.

The question of what weapons were held at the camp had been the cause of a considerable amount of worry when planning the raid. We knew that normally, arms were kept locked up in the camp armouries and used for training and guard purposes only, and also that issues were strictly controlled ... things could be otherwise ... but hopefully the majority of terrorists would be unarmed when the attack went in.

The fifty FRELIMO soldiers attached to the camp were certainly always armed.

Where a problem could lie was if a large deployment of terrorists into Rhodesia had been scheduled, as according to information, arms issues were invariably made just before they departed. And ... as two thousand terrorists were said to be standing by for just this event ... we could find ourselves up against some stern opposition.

Arms for issue to terrorists pending deployment were, according to information, brought from Chimoio on an as and when required basis.

Another even worse possibility, if our security had been breached, would be that *everyone* based there would be armed and awaiting the column's arrival ... in which case the column would find themselves clenched within the jaws of a massive trap, from which there would be little chance of escape.

These then were the collective thoughts of the seventy two Scouts who drove in past the boom ... the infantry vehicles pausing briefly to drop off the eighty one millimetre mortar teams just inside the camp ... and the Ferrets hiving off left to cover the terrorists' anticipated escape routes towards the Nyadzonya river, while the Unimogs carried on slowly, picking their way carefully to avoid a devil's hodge-podge of tree stumps, on towards the parade ground.

The parade ground suddenly opened up in front of them, and there were few men in the column who did not gasp in amazement at the sight which greeted them ... there could never have been enough rehearsals ... never enough briefings and mental preparation to have readied them for the sight which met their eyes.

A short distance away from them as the Unimogs formed into line just off the parade ground, was the largest single concentration of terrorists mustered which would ever be seen by any member of the Rhodesian Security Forces, throughout the entire war.

'Jesus!' exclaimed Willie van der Riet to the Scouts on his vehicle, 'I just hope we don't run out of ammunition.'

The vehicles formed smoothly into a firing line in accordance with the pre-plan ... Rob Warracker's command Unimog with its twin FN 7,62 medium automatic guns taking the centre position, Unimogs with the twenty millimetre cannons taking up each flank, another carrying a fifty calibre Browning stopping at the far left, while Chris Robins, with the Russian 12,7 millimetre heavy machinegun, moved to the far right.

The two infantry-carrying Unimogs of Bruce Fitzsimmons and Pete McNeilage came to a halt away from the left flank of the firing line.

The terrorists on the parade ground were milling about in a state of flux, making the Scouts uncertain whether they were forming up for parade or leaving it.

The situation, as is usually the case when you get down to the action, did not quite fit either the A or B plans ... but it was closest to plan A which Rob Warracker decided to give a try ... the prisoners would be vital to our war effort.

Sergeant Rodrigues picked up his bullhorn and boomed out in Portuguese, but his appeal for them to stand still had the opposite effect for ... immediately ... the terrorists started swarming towards the vehicles from the parade ground.

Sergeant Gombeni took the loud hailer and tried in Shona.

'*Zimbabwe tatora* ... we have taken Zimbabwe,' he bawled. '*Ma-comrades, inisai vanhu mumaline tikutourirei phadze Zimbabwe* ... comrades stay in your ranks and let us explain matters relating to Zimbabwe.'

It was no use, the mob on parade broke their loosely formed ranks, as did some who were marching, and they all rushed towards the column, shouting and cheering.

Some were carrying weapons, but the majority were, thankfully, carrying practice guns carved from wood.

Soon the column vehicles were surrounded by a surging, milling crowd of several thousand terrorists, all of whom were shouting ZANLA slogans and struggling to get to the front so they could reach up and shake hands with the men on the vehicles.

At least one thing was crystal clear . . . no one suspected they were Selous Scouts.

No one was more surprised, it appears, than the Commanders of the camp, by this unexpected turn of events, and men clearly in positions of authority, were seen trying to shoulder their way through to the front to see where the trucks had come from and find out what the visitors wanted.

To add to the already unreal air of confusion, someone commenced tooting the camp's emergency whistle, but its only effect was to accelerate the rush to the column.

Soon, some four thousand yelling and singing terrorists were jam-packed around the vehicles and more were streaming in from all corners of the camp.

Sergeant Gombeni was still bawling futilely into the megaphone . . . cursing the terrorists for being such an ill-disciplined rabble . . . but no one took any notice.

'*Viva FRELIMO* . . . up FRELIMO,' screamed a happily jiving terrorist, undulating only inches away from the hostile muzzles of Sergeant Bruce Fitzsimmons' twin MAG's.

'*Viva* your bloody arse!' muttered Bruce through his bushy beard, standing on tip toe to get the maximum depression on his MAG's . . . when he opened fire it would be at point blank range.

The terrorist suddenly ceased undulating and his eyes widened as though they were going to pop out of their sockets, as the colour of Bruce's steely and clearly European eyes . . . which were squinting down at him through the gun-sight . . . registered on his senses.

'*Murungu!* . . . *Murungu!* Whiteman! . . . Whiteman!' he screamed, frantically attempting to fight a passage away from the vehicles.

His cry of panic was joined by the cries of others in the front of the crowd as they too suddenly twigged there were Europeans on the trucks as well as Africans, and they joined the mad scramble to get away as well.

Unfortunately for them, their warning cries were drowned by the singing and cheering of those in the rear ranks who were still anxiously jostling forward to get a better look.

Rob Warracker realised it had to be plan B, and it had to be plan B quickly . . . they were at grave risk of being swamped.

'Fire!' he barked into his radio's handset.

The effect was indescribable. Two twenty millimetre cannons, a fifty calibre Browning heavy machinegun, three thirty calibre Browning machineguns, one 12,7 millimetre Russian heavy machinegun and three twin 7,62 Belgian FN MAG's plus the individual infantry weapons carried by the Scouts, opened up, all at the same time.

Hundreds of terrorists fell to the ground with the first onslaught of bullets, as though a gale-force wind had blown them off their feet.

The mortars did not join battle immediately, as the column had been completely surrounded by terrorists, so when the order to open fire was given, the mortar teams scrambled for cover to avoid being caught in the cross-fire.

Some terrorists close to the vehicles threw themselves down and tried to crawl under the Scouts' vehicles to get shelter, but were potted over the sides.

A sustained rate of fire was maintained until all movement on the parade ground had ceased.

While this had been going on a certain amount of return fire had been directed at the column from the buildings in the camp, and by the time Rob gave the order to cease firing, five men, two Europeans and three African Scouts had sustained minor gunshot wounds.

A sweep in accordance with the overall plan then took place and the Scouts moved through

the entire camp complex, while Sergeant Andy Balaam's mortars put in supporting fire and kept the registered escape routes well bracketed too.

The three Ferret scout cars, which had been positioned as cut-offs at the main terrorist escape route down to the Nyadzonya river as shown in the camp orders, wrought terrible slaughter indeed. One Ferret, was credited with having slaughtered well in excess of one hundred and fifty terrorists as they tried to run through the hell which was the killing ground.

Unfortunately, both for ourselves and for the wounded terrorist inmates of the hospital whom we had hoped to capture and take back with us to Rhodesia, a chance tracer ignited the thatch of the huge building, which went up like dry tinder and all the patients who had survived operations in Rhodesia, were quickly burned to death.

Those who had survived the purgatory of the first merciless onslaught of bullets and the holocaust of fire, as other thatch building were set to the torch, still had to contend with water. Those responsible for siting the camp had clearly, never for a moment, considered a disaster of such awful magnitude befalling the camp.

They had nestled it against a bend of the Nyadzonya River where it was almost nine metres wide and two metres deep. Many hundreds tried to escape across the river, but relatively few Africans can swim, and over two hundred terrorists were drowned while trying to cross to the comparative safety of the far bank, while many more who were attempting to hide in the reeds lining the river bank, were shot during the sweep afterwards.

During the course of the attack fourteen prisoners were captured and a vast quantity of documents collected from the camp buildings, before they were fired.

While this was going on, Ben Botha and his men at their ambush position listened enviously to the sound of distant gunfire.

'The boys are giving it a good rev,' said a member of his callsign enviously.

'Grey Land-Rover . . . six armed men aboard . . . diesel . . .' the voice of the early-warning team commander crackled over the radio.

Must be the one that was seen before the column turned off, thought Ben. He cocked his ear towards the clearly audible sounds of gunfire coming from the terrorist base. They'll stop . . . they must hear it . . . but they didn't.

Shortly afterwards it nosed into view and lurched down into the rock-strewn river bed . . . the killing ground.

For a moment it halted as the driver changed gear.

'Hit it!' barked Ben.

In less than twenty seconds it was all over . . . it couldn't be otherwise . . . the range was point blank . . . the enemy although armed, had no chance to return fire.

There were six men in the Land-Rover and five were dead . . . the survivor was in a bad way but still able to talk.

Three of the dead were FRELIMO officers based at the camp . . . one was the ZANLA driver named Guy, and the other was Obert Dhawayo, whose day of reckoning had finally caught up with him . . . we had missed him when trying to help the Criminal Investigation Department to catch him during our operations in the Ngorima Tribal Trust Lands, some months before.

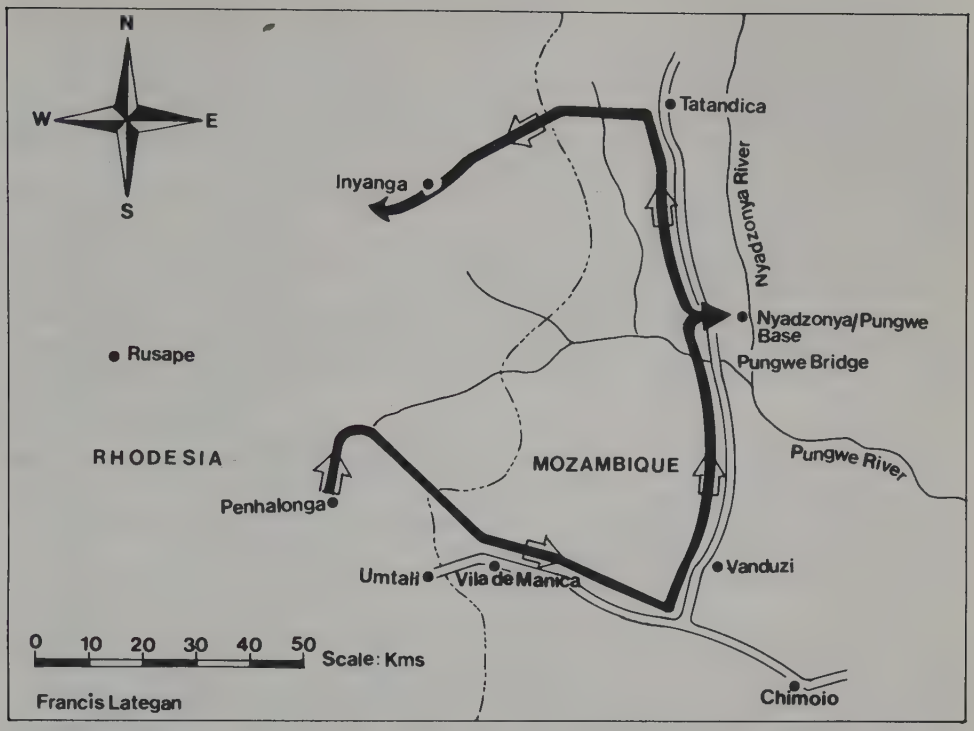
The survivor was Edmund Kaguri, Political Commissar for the ZANLA Central Committee (High Command) who died of wounds during the column's return journey to Rhodesia which was unfortunate, as his rank and standing on the ZANLA Central Committee would have made him an exceptionally valuable prize for in-depth interrogation.

Once he was satisfied that everything was under control, Rob Warracker handed over to his second in command, Tim Hallows, to complete the house clearing and final mopping up around the base and set off back to blow the Pungwe River Bridge, taking with him Chris Robins' Unimog mounting its deadly 12,7 Russian heavy machinegun.

He paused briefly at Ben Botha's ambush position, while Ben's callsign embussed, and then they all set off back to the main Tete road in a convoy of five vehicles.

At the intersection of the Nyadzonya road with the Tete road, Ben's men debussed and set up

another ambush position . . . to protect not only the column's rear but Rob's too . . . while Rob Warracker's and Chris Robins' vehicles turned to go back to the Pungwe Bridge, taking with them the Unimog carrying the explosives.



L6. Operation *Eland*. Map of flying column attack on Nyadzonya/Pungwe ZANLA terrorist base: August, 1976.

Back at Inkomo headquarters, I was like a cat on hot bricks, for I had received no reports from Rob, and, apart from snatches of inter-vehicular conversation . . . which had been picked up by our radio relay station, which we had established on the top of the seven thousand feet high Mount Inyangombi, near Inyanga . . . the highest point in Rhodesia . . . we had little idea as to what was going on deep inside Mozambique.

At 08h00 General Hickman telephoned asking what I intended doing about the Ferret armoured car which was, presumably, still lying upside-down in a Mozambique river bed.

I patiently explained to the General that I had apprised the Brigadier commanding the *Thrasher* operational area of the situation at 03h30 and had suggested he arrange for the armoured car to be picked up. I also reminded him that it was customary for recoveries to be initiated by the rear echelons . . . not the forward ones . . . so it could hardly be my responsibility.

I was then ordered to phone the *Thrasher* Brigadier and sort something out, which I did. He was still not helpful and put me on to the Officer Commanding, Special Air Service, who declined to go unless he first conducted a reconnaissance.

It didn't really matter much by that time . . . I knew it was rapidly getting too late anyway.

I called General Hickman back and put him in the picture.

'We will have to admit we did it,' I ended by saying, 'they will have ample evidence to prove it anyway.'

He agreed. He clearly had no alternative but to tell the Overall Co-ordinating Committee and the Prime Minister.

Meanwhile in Mozambique, Rob Warracker was coming in sight of the Pungwe Bridge, where a number of FRELIMO soldiers were busily setting up roadblocks at both ends.

Rob, a man of action, wasted no time . . . fire was immediately initiated and the FRELIMO were overwhelmed and killed.

Tossing the bodies into the river to make room for the demolition kits, Rob and his team quickly got to work setting the charges on the bridge.

Chris Robins who was keeping an alert and armed watch with his Russian 12,7, while Rob Warracker and his men got things going on the bridge, saw several heavy vehicles approaching from the south, so he opened fire on them to make them keep their distance until Rob had finished laying the charges.

The Pungwe Bridge was a large one, over two hundred metres in length, and it took time to ready it for destruction.

Then Hennie Steyn, manning the relay station on Mount Inyangombi, reported back to Inkomo operations room that he had heard a colossal bang.

I had been in an agony of suspense and worry for the previous twelve hours . . . even although I believed and always told everyone . . . that no news is good news on operations, when every man's attention is totally committed. It is usually only when things start to crumble that the radio calls start coming in.

It was invariably my practice not to ask for sitreps, or to interfere in the slightest degree once an operation was committed, for I trusted my men . . . I knew if they did hit problems they would get back to me.

News of the explosion was consequently most heartening to me, because it coincided with the time we had scheduled for the Pungwe Bridge to cease bridging the Pungwe River.

Rob and his team did their job well, dropping four of the five spans of the bridge into the river.

Tim Hallows, having finished clearing the camp, ordered the Scouts to load up their sacks of captured documents and then, taking their prisoners with them, they mounted up and drove with considerable elation back up the track to the junction of the main Tete road and joined Ben Botha and his men. Soon afterwards, Rob Warracker and his demolition party returned from the bridge and rejoined the column.

It had been planned that during the exfiltration, an attack be made on small but important ZANLA staging post called Masuku, which was to be found on the last part of the column's half circle on its way out of the country, but in view of the column's low ammunition state, Rob decided it would be wiser to by-pass it. For all he knew there could already be a strong FRELIMO relief column on its way from Tete to the Nyadzonya/Pungwe base to answer a *Mayday* call and . . . if they bumped it . . . they would need every round of ammunition they had left.

Such was the position brought about by the refusal of a Dakota re-supply drop.

By 15h30 the column had left the main Tete road and were making fairly good time along a track closely by-passing Masuku terrorist staging post which led towards the Rhodesian border and home.

Then, to everyone's uneasy surprise, they climbed to the crest of a hill and ahead of them saw a little village straddling the road . . . there was no way past . . . the only way was through it.

The map was hurriedly examined . . . the position was clear . . . it was a village marked on the map . . . just an ordinary sleepy tribal village . . . except that unexpectedly and alarmingly, there were a lot of FRELIMO around . . . at least a company of them.

Ahead of them, as they drove boldly into the village, were nine FRELIMO soldiers by the side of the road watching in surprise.

The Selous Scouts waved, having been given strict instructions by Rob to hold their fire unless and until they were given the command to open up.

A man in the last truck lost his FRELIMO cap which blew into the road.

To the concern of all, a FRELIMO soldier picked it up and ran after the column, trying to flag it down.

'Get moving,' the Scout said to the driver, 'he's catching us up . . . he'll recognise me as a white man if he does.'

But the driver couldn't make better speed being restricted by the speed of the truck in front . . . so the friendly FRELIMO soldier did catch them up.

An African Selous Scout saved the day by leaning over the side, relieving the FRELIMO soldier of the cap and thanking him.

By this time many men in the column were reaching a stage of exhaustion through nervous tension and lack of sleep and were very edgy indeed, so the situation was touch and go for a few moments.

Immediately at the end of the village, the road forked left and right . . . no time to procrastinate . . . the column went left . . . and . . . ended up on a football field without any other road exits.

At any other time a mistake like that could have been embarrassing . . . then it had the makings of being embarrassingly fatal.

The column turned around and went back the way they had come, but this time . . . an important-looking FRELIMO officer waved them down . . . Rob ordered they bluff their way through.

'Where are you going?'

The FRELIMO officer was clearly suspicious.

'We are going to Zimbabwe,' Sergeant Gombeni told him. 'We are going for deployment.'

'I see . . . well . . . all right then,' said the officer stepping back as the column drove off again.

They had to get away . . . quickly . . . many of the Scouts had seen a 12,7 millimetre gun emplaced in a hut without a roof and sited as an anti-aircraft weapon. No one wished to sample that at close range.

Then, the track petered out like the first one . . . and worse . . . one of the Ferrets which had broken down before reaching the village . . . broke its tow as it lurched through a dip.

The column had to stop . . . a number of locals and FRELIMO gathered around watching interestedly as the African Scouts worked feverishly at fixing the hitch . . . the European Scouts shyly trying to remain inconspicuous . . . pulling their balaclavas down over their blackened faces.

'They're setting up mortars,' a voice warned over the radio.

The FRELIMO were as well . . . pseudo games were over . . . it was time once more to fight.

The first to open up was Piet van der Riet who took out a FRELIMO sixty millimetre mortar being set up on a ridge.

The tow hitch was hurriedly reattached to the Ferret and they attempted to head across country for Rhodesia . . . it had become clear this was their only way out . . . but it was difficult country for bundu-bashing . . . particularly as there was only one vehicle in the whole column fitted with a winch.

Back at Inkomo I had been subjected to a bombardment of telephone calls throughout the day . . . from Generals . . . from Colonels . . . from everyone . . . they all wanted sitreps . . . the Overall Co-ordinating Committee had to make an official announcement in view of the abandoned armoured car . . . but they were in a cleft stick for they were petrified we might have made a mistake and hit a refugee camp, instead of a terrorist camp.

I finally made personal contact with Rob Warracker at 15h00 . . . but he seemed strangely reluctant to talk . . . which, in retrospect, was hardly surprising as he had personally been on the go, non-stop, for two days and a night.

'Zero-Whiskey – Zero-Alpha, do you read?'

'Zero-Whiskey – fives go ahead.'

'Zero-Alpha – confirm mission complete.'

'Zero-Whiskey – affirmative.'

'Zero-Alpha – roger – I know you are busy and I don't want to bother you, but I must have the casualty figures.'

'Zero-Whiskey – five slightly wounded.'

'Zero-Alpha – is that all?' A pregnant pause as my heart sank.

'Zero-Whiskey – affirmative – do you want their serial numbers?'

'Zero-Alpha – negative, I'm referring to the other side,' my heart sprang back up from my stomach to its proper place once again.

'Zero-Whiskey – three figures.'

'Zero-Alpha – three figures – confirm they were real (terrorists) ones and not *povo* (refugees).'

'Zero-Whiskey – affirmative,' he then added testily. 'Look I'm being mortared can I have cyclone . . . air effort?'

'Zero-Alpha – roger – will fix – out.'

I telephoned General Hickman.

'Ron, here, Sir . . . I can't give you an accurate figure, Sir, all I can say is that it is three figures . . . so it could be a hundred, or it could be nine hundred.'

'Can you get me something more accurate, Ron? The politicians are jumping up and down . . . can you confirm they were definitely terrorists?'

'Affirmative, Sir, definitely terrorists . . . the chaps are just about done up and are being mortared. It looks like they are going to have to get out across country . . . but they'll have to make their own road . . . and they haven't even got picks and shovels . . . all the weight capacity of the vehicles was taken up by ammunition. Their position is very close to the border . . . five or six kilometres at the most. Can they have some air effort?'

'Leave it to me,' said General Hickman, 'I'll fix it.'

A section of Hawker Hunters were soon flying overhead the column, and after a little guidance from the ground, they quickly neutralised the FRELIMO mortars.

Noticing that return anti-aircraft fire was being directed at them by the 12,7 millimetre gun the Scouts had spotted earlier, the Hunters put in pinpoint strikes both on the roofless hut where the gun was emplaced and on a store nearby. They scored direct hits on both, and enormous explosions erupted where the store had been . . . indicating it had been an ammunition store.

A helicopter then came in briefly, dropping off picks and shovels, and took off again with one of the more serious casualties. Afterwards, a Lynx push-pull spotter aircraft appeared overhead, gave them an exact positional fix and indicated the easiest cross-country route to the border.

The column spent the whole of that night cutting, winching, digging and pulling their way towards the border, but by first light on Tuesday the 10th August, there were still two more kilometres to go and, most of the men were utterly exhausted.

Nearly eight hours later, at 13h45, the column finally crossed the last river and entered Rhodesia to the north of the Katiyo Tea Estates, the FRELIMO giving them a farewell, although ineffectual, stonking with eighty one and sixty millimetre mortars.

The Overall Co-Ordinating Committee had meanwhile deemed it expedient to get an as accurate a picture as possible, so they could approve the final wording of a press release.

So, earlier in the morning, a Canberra bomber had been sent to make a photographic run over the camp. The photographs, once they were processed, showed hundreds of bodies strewn around the whole area of the devastated camp. A circle was promptly drawn encompassing the parade ground, and when three different people had each reached a total count of three hundred bodies within the circle . . . the figure of three hundred terrorist casualties was put out in a press release.

There were a lot more . . . but even three hundred terrorists made it far and away the biggest single kill of the war so far, so at the end of the day, the payment of one antique armoured car as an exchange . . . it had once been given to us by the British for nothing anyway . . . was a cheap price to pay.

It still seems a pity they did not spend more time counting . . . for the real figure . . . even going by the ZANLA figure . . . was considerably higher than three hundred.

Rob ordered the column to halt once they were over the border and they went into laager . . . everyone needed a rest . . . besides, with their FRELIMO gear and their vehicles in FRELIMO camouflage, they couldn't set out for Inkomo until after dark.

First though, before sleep . . . routines had to be followed . . . roll call . . .

A terribly agitated Rob called me to report that two European members of the column were missing. One was the intrepid Corporal Rodrigues on loan to us from the Special Air Service and the other was Sergeant Paul Holton, a soldier who was clearly illfated on the operation . . . he had already landed upside-down in a river bed as a crewman of the abandoned armoured car . . . and lost a precious bottle of whisky too.

My heart sank . . . I visualised them both being paraded through the shabby streets of Maputo, followed by extensive interrogation sessions . . . of torture . . . the first Rhodesian prisoners of war actually captured in action . . . what a bonus for the enemy . . . it was a gloomy prospect.

There was a faint . . . although remote hope . . . they had dropped into an exhausted sleep and fallen off their vehicle while the column was cutting its way through to the border.

The last section of the column's route was air-searched by a Lynx . . . but they found no trace of them.

After discussions with Rob on the radio, my bet was they had been left behind at Pungwe base . . . which turned out to be precisely the case.

Our column drills had been very carefully worked out, and there was a standard one designed to avoid the danger of men being left behind after every stop, the column would not re-start until every vehicle commander had personally reported to the column commander by radio that his crew were all present and correct.

In the excitement engendered by the abandoning of the Ferret armoured car, and the subsequent haste to make up time so they would arrive at the target on schedule, the two crew members had merely jumped onto the nearest vehicle where there was room and nothing, consequently, had been done about permanently allocating them to any other crew. So, as they were not thought of as belonging to any particular vehicle crew strength, the individual vehicle roll calls at halts, both on the forward journey and on the return, never included them.

Corporal Rodrigues had been added to our numbers as a last minute supernumerary to boost our authenticity and . . . being not only a late arrival, but a gregarious soldier who tended to move from one vehicle to another anyway . . . he was not regarded by any vehicle commander as belonging to a particular crew either.

It was sheer coincidence which had thrown Corporal Rodrigues and Sergeant Paul Holton together during the final sweep of the Nyadzonya/Pungwe base. Eventually, as the action died down, they found themselves in partnership by the river's edge, winkling out and killing terrorists hiding in the reeds.

While they were so engaged . . . and very busily engaged at that . . . Corporal Rodrigues mentioned he had heard the sound of truck engines.

'Sounds like the column is going,' he said.

'Look, Buster,' Paul said scornfully, 'you are with the Selous Scouts . . . we don't leave men behind. Who do you think we are?'

Suddenly, even Paul was conscious of something strange . . . there were no guns firing . . . and, except for the crackling of flames as the base furiously burned, everything was ominously silent.

They doubled back to the parade ground which was littered with the corpses of dead terrorists . . . and . . . the only sign of the column was a slight halo of settling dust hanging over the exit road marking its departure.

'So the Selous Scouts don't leave people behind eh?' asked Corporal Rodrigues with a touch of bitterness.

'I suggest,' said Paul Holton unhappily, 'we talk about that some other time . . . we've got a long walk ahead and we'd better get the hell out of here.'

It was fortunate indeed that Corporal Rodrigues had farmed in the Pungwe region before the collapse of Portuguese rule. He had a good idea where most of the African villages were and which route to take to avoid them.

Walking mainly at night they managed to evade the attentions of FRELIMO and crossed the border into Rhodesia late during the afternoon of Thursday the 12th August.

Almost dead-beat, hungry and very thirsty, they entered an African-owned store just inside Rhodesia where they flopped down, and asked for cokes.

Paul Holton asked one of the almost terrified store assistants to take his bicycle and ride to the Police Station, which was not very far away, to fetch help ... unfortunately, the assistant's English was poor ... Paul's Shona was lamentable ... so there was a bad communications gap.

The store assistant though, needed no second bidding and fled the store.

'There are two Cuban soldiers at the store,' he panted out at the Police Station.

'Hands up ... move an inch and I'll shoot.'

Sergeant Holton and Corporal Rodrigues looked cautiously towards the door of the store. It was efficiently covered from the outside by a Police Anti Terrorist Unit stick ... the stick leader came in, his cocked FN rifle pointing unwaveringly in their direction.

'Oh, don't be bloody stupid,' said Paul, 'all we want is a lift.'

'Get your hands up,' barked the stick leader, thinking, as he said afterwards, that's pretty good English for a Cuban!

Paul suddenly realised the problem ... in their tiredness and relief at getting back to Rhodesia, they'd forgotten they were still dressed in FRELIMO uniform and carrying communist AK sub machineguns.

'No, hang on,' he said hurriedly, 'I'm a Selous Scout ... he's Special Air Service ... we've just been across the border on an operation. We need a lift back to base.'

After convincing him of their credentials, the Police Anti Terrorist Unit stick leader, slowly lowered his rifle.

'I'd never have believed it,' he said shaking his head.

'How about being a pal and paying for the cokes,' asked Paul, 'we've no money with us.'

The reaction to the raid by my old friend, the Officer Commanding, Special Air Service, took some beating.

A particular civilian gentleman was completely electrified by the results and as, in his mind, there could be only one Unit which could have pulled it off ... the Special Air Service ... he showed his appreciation for their endeavours by sending their Officer Commander a ticket for a rugby test match in South Africa, along with a congratulatory letter.

Did my friend pass the ticket over to me you ask? Not on your life ... he went to South Africa instead ... and bathed in the sun ... and in the reflected glory of the Selous Scouts ... at the test match!

The Minister of Defence, Mr. P. K. van der Byl, once an officer in one of Her Majesty's more haughty Hussar regiments, and a scion of a noble Cape family, asked for a personal debrief.

Neither Rob nor I were very keen on the idea ... we had set our sights on other targets and we had no wish to discuss our *modus operandi,* but it was a command performance as he was Minister of Defence ... even so, we approached the interview with caution.

Minister P. K. van der Byl, I must hasten to add, is a great character and he rated high in the popularity polls of the troops. His English accent bears that unmistakably cultivated stamp of a former British cavalry officer and, on one occasion, when he was informally addressing some men of the Rhodesian Light Infantry in the field, one tough troopie leaning on his rifle was seen to shake his head.

'*Ek sê, ou* China,' he whispered to his mate, 'what *taal* is that *ou* speaking?'

But he took his job as Minister of Defence seriously, and he often appeared in the operational area wearing a pair of shorts which exposed yards of thin shanks, while he uncomplainingly showed he could walk in the bush as well as the best of them. The Rhodesian Light Infantry ... who were very particular in their choice of friends ... took to him and concluded that his strange *taal* apart, he was *sommer* a *lekker ou* ... he was all right.

On arrival at the Minister's Office in Milton Buildings, he personally came out and ushered us in.

Rob and I had decided in advance to go baldly through the operation and not dwell on too much detail. The Minister, however, was not having any.

'Ronald, dear chap,' he drawled when we had finished, 'you say you simply drove straight through all those places in Mozambique . . . how on earth did you get away with it?'

'Well,' I said diffidently, 'we organised our vehicles to look like theirs.'

'Good Lord,' he exclaimed, 'how extraordinary, but what about the base . . . I can understand the vehicles . . . devilishly clever . . . what I don't understand is how you got into their base in broad daylight.'

'Well,' I said, choosing my words, 'we organised the chaps so they looked like the FRELIMO too.'

'You mean you wore FRELIMO uniforms?'

'Yes, Sir.'

'My God,' said the Minister, 'My God.'

The Scouts had made a friend for life.

An unexpected accolade to this operation came years later, when Bishop Muzorewa took office as the first African Prime Minister of Rhodesia.

To help enlist grass-roots support amongst the indigenous people, a number of former terrorists who supported Muzorewa were brought into camps to undergo training by us.

It was vital they did not learn who was training them, as we were highly unpopular with the terrorists, to say the least, and the disclosure would not only have endangered the lives of our soldiers engaged in the actual training, but it would also have destroyed Muzorewa's credibility amongst the former terrorists, as well as amongst the tribesmen. But, as we were, without doubt, the people who best understood the terrorist, his ways and his systems, it was a risk which had to be taken.

After the first batch had been trained, it was decided to move a hundred of them to a farm in the Mangula area. We dared not provide military transport, as the former terrorists were dangerously jittery towards the Security Forces, suspecting the whole scheme might be a trap.

I arranged for two Territorial Army members of the Selous Scouts, who farmed in that area, to use their heavy farm trucks to transport the former terrorists . . . now auxiliaries . . . from Mangula airstrip to the farm.

After packing them into the trucks, the commander of the former terrorists got in next to the civilian-clothed Selous Scout driver.

'Do you know of the Selous Scouts?' enquired the semi-retired terrorist commander, after they had been amicably chatting for a few moments.

'Yes,' hesitated the Scout uneasily, feeling the conversation was getting a little too close to home. 'I've heard about them I guess . . . everybody has.'

The former terrorist shook his head in open admiration.

'*Skuz'apo moto* – Selous Scouts, they're fire! You know boss,' he said emotionally, quite forgetting he was now a commander and no longer one of the so-called oppressed, 'those men . . .'

To the astonishment of the Selous Scout he went on to give an account of the Nyadzonya attack from a ZANLA terrorist's point of view. He had been one of those who had escaped death by hiding in the reeds along the banks of the river.

The Scout had been there too . . . but he had been behind a thirty calibre machinegun in an armoured car.

The raid on the Nyadzonya/Pungwe base was, to my mind, the classic operation of the whole war . . . carried out by only seventy two soldiers . . . without air support . . . and without a reserve of any kind.

The risk factors were staggering . . . but so were the rewards . . . the net return for the effort expended was out of all proportion . . . which amply supports the adage that fortune favours the bold.

It received wide press coverage not only in Rhodesia, but in the overseas' press.

The terse communique which was issued by the Rhodesians did not cover the method of attack, nor did it say who mounted it . . . which, because it was carried out by the Selous Scouts wearing pseudo dress, was for reasons which must now be self-explanatory.

Needless to say, our Nyadzonya/Pungwe raid was soon re-labelled by ZANLA and her allies as the Nyadzonya *massacre.* It was something we in Rhodesia had become used to . . . yet, it seems if one checks the ZANLA and ZIPRA accounts throughout the war, we Rhodesians never once carried out an attack on anywhere other than a refugee camp . . . for ZANLA and ZIPRA never once admitted we had attacked a guerrilla base.

The cry of *refugee* camp is perhaps understandable, for both ZANLA and ZIPRA squeezed the United Nations High Commission for Refugees' (UNHCR) lemon for as much financial juice as they could get . . . and all their training and base camps were given a refugee pseudonym.

Naturally, visits by officials of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, and anyone else with the taste and appetite for the ZANLA or ZIPRA red herrings, were scheduled and planned for . . . well in advance . . . never impromptu.

Needless to say, on those visits the camps would be full of old folk, women and children, the closest thing to a firearm seen would be a plough shear . . .

All the visitors, at the conclusion of their visit, would be suitably touched . . . as would the world . . . but mostly it would be in their pockets.

Such an inspection had apparently been made of the Nyadzonya/Pungwe base in May, 1976, by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees' representative in Maputo, Mr. H. Idoyaga, who was accompanied by certain other ladies and gentlemen, to whom the word terrorist in a black African context is mostly unacceptable.

The Nyadzonya/Pungwe terrorist base was, as might have been expected, given a clean bill of health and the continuing status of *refugee camp* by Mr. H. Idoyaga.

Immediately after the Selous Scouts' raid, neither FRELIMO nor ZANLA were anxious for an early inspection *in loco,* and the report of Mr. H. Idoyaga on his investigation makes interesting reading.

He described his visit there as *desolating* and said: 'Ten mass graves were being covered by bulldozers . . . stench from graves testified to what must have been a horrifying scene . . .'

It also testified, which was more to the point, that he hadn't been rushed to get out there and investigate while the scene was fresh . . . he only got there after a FRELIMO and ZANLA clean-up had been performed.

Bodies in mass graves . . . a fairly favourite picture in the press at the time . . . does not necessarily spell atrocity. Particularly when most of the corpses in them are of young men of military age, all wearing a similar type of military style clothing . . . and when a few are still wearing ammunition belts . . . as they were!

Nevertheless, it should not be surprising that the High Commissioner of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, when he issued his statement in Geneva on the *investigations* carried out by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, in the sole person of H. Idoyaga, presumably, ignored all this.

'I have no doubt,' he said, 'that a settlement of Zimbabwean refugees which has been receiving United Nations' assistance was attacked, and that hundreds of refugees were killed and wounded. To be a refugee is, in itself, a tragedy. That such large groups of refugees should have been made victims of indiscriminate bloodshed makes this incident particularly shocking and abominable. It escapes my understanding as to what those responsible thought they were accomplishing through such an atrocity.'

The casualty figures the United Nations High Command for Refugees gave, was:

Counted dead	675
Wounded in hospital	295
Wounded in a temporary camp	204
Seriously wounded in Beira hospital	176
Total	1,350

The total of thirteen hundred and fifty means their figures show exactly half wounded and half dead . . . six hundred and seventy five of each . . . which was clearly a case of ZANLA's and FRELIMO's simplified mathematics.

The Rhodesian Government asked the United Nations to set up a commission of enquiry to investigate exactly what Nyadzonya/Pungwe was . . . a terrorist camp . . . or a refugee camp?

The Rhodesian request, of course, was ignored.

So, with this book we now have the Selous Scouts' account of what happened at Nyadzonya/Pungwe . . . we already knew what ZANLA and FRELIMO had set up for United Nations' consumption as we knew from the Aga Khan's report what they believed . . . but, there is a final report to complete the picture . . .

On the 23rd November, 1977, the biggest attack of the war took place on the large terrorist complex at Chimoio, by the Rhodesian Light Infantry and the Special Air Service. It had replaced Nyadzonya/Pungwe as the ZANLA main base . . . the terrorists killed there amounted to twelve hundred.

Amongst the tons of documents recovered at Chimoio, was the official ZANLA report on the attack by the Rhodesian Security Forces on the Nyadzonya/Pungwe base, dated the 19th August, 1976. It gives their casualty figure as one thousand and twenty eight killed, three hundred and nine wounded in hospital, and a thousand missing.

This ZANLA version of the raid is remarkably similar, on broad lines, to the account of the Selous Scouts.

The ZANLA report makes it crystal clear it was a major guerilla base, which ensures it was pretty certain that neither Mr. H. Idoyaga of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) ever had the advantage of having sight of it.

Here, without comment, is what it said:

ZANU HEADQUARTERS CHIMOIO:
REPORT ON THE MASSACRE AT NYADZONYA BASE BY THE RHODESIAN FORCES ON THE 9th AUGUST, 1976. DATE: 19th AUGUST, 1976.

Monday the 9th August, 1976, was declared a holiday and we intended to continue with the programme and items, songs, plays, traditional dancing, etc. which we were unable to finish on the 8th August.

Soon after the parade at approximately 8.10 a.m., the Red Guards took up their positions on the football ground and Comrades Emilio (General Staff), Hambakwe, Tenhika, Jinx and Dzapasi, also took up their positions on the football ground. Comrade Kaguri, Committee, Obert and Guy had gone to Vila Tatandica. Comrades of Battalion A were still marching on the parade ground while comrades of other battalions were also making formations getting ready to march down to the football ground.

The girls were still at their barracks, although a few were already at the ground . . . but the majority of the mass were still at their houses.

The total number of people at Nyadzonya on this day was 5,250, which was made up as follows:

Male comrades	3,544
Female comrades	387
Red Guards	707
Povo . . . mass	604
Administration	8
Total	5,250

At approximately 8.25 a.m. five open trucks and two armoured cars entered the camp through the main gate. Six of our guards were stationed at the gate with Stephen Hazariwetu as the Guard Commander. FRELIMO usually assign duties to two of their soldiers at the gate daily, but unfortunately, there was none that day. Two FRELIMO soldiers had earlier on arrived at the gate, but had then returned to the camp for no apparent reason.

Of the five trucks, four had benches at the sides with about seven people sitting on each of the benches. The fifth, a Mercedes Benz, was in the lead and carrying about twenty people.

No one was able to accurately notice the number of occupants in the two armoured cars.

On arrival in the camp, the trucks took their positions as indicated on the attached map (map not captured), and they started to address the comrades over a loud speaker system saying:

'*Pamberi ne ZANU* – forward with ZANU, *Viva Frelimo* – up Frelimo, *Zimbabwe tatora* – we have taken Zimbabwe. *Ma-comrades, misai vanhu mumaline tikutourirei pha-dze Zimbabwe* – Comrades stay in your lines and let us explain about matters relating to Zimbabwe.'

Then the comrades rushed from all corners of the camp to the trucks. An emergency whistle was also blown which accelerated the rush. It is not yet clear as to who the emergency whistle was blown by.

While this rushing was going on, our Security Officer, Roy, was advancing to the trucks to check who they were. Other comrades of the Security Department, Manix, Nhamo, Nofest and Farai were already demanding *Gia de marche* – passes ... from the occupants of the trucks.

The trucks were bearing Mozambique number plates.

The number of the comrades who were by then gathered closely around the trucks was about three thousand, and another fifteen hundred were within a five hundred yard radius of the trucks.

A voice shouted through the loud speaker: '*Viva ne Zimbabwe* – up Zimbabwe.'

All of a sudden the enemy fired. Killer Matanisa, Commander of Battalion A, gave an order to the comrades to take cover and crawl. Among the commanders on the scene were Jose, Teddy and Casa Blanca, all of whom were shouting to the comrades without success, to get away from the trucks. Most of these commanders were killed by the enemy, five were injured.

The shooting

After the first shot, all hell broke loose, light machineguns, sub-machineguns, NATO rifles and other sophisticated machineguns on the armoured cars opened up. Several hand-grenades and tear gas shells were thrown at the crowd.

A mixture of smoke and dust covered the entire playing ground between the parade area and the new kitchen.

Slogans such as: '*Pamberi ne Hondo* – forward with the war ...' '*Pamberi ne ZANU* – forward with ZANU ...' could be heard being shouted by dying comrades.

Some comrades who were crawling away were run over by the advancing enemy trucks.

The only way to get out of the line of enemy fire, was to cross the Nyadzonya River.

As can be reflected from the attached map, Nyadzonya was not strategically situated ... it was in a precarious position. The camp had a river almost nine metres wide and five feet deep at the deepest part as its boundary, and this river played a major role in taking the lives of many of our comrades. Small boys and girls and even older comrades who were unable to swim, were drowned in the river. It is estimated that almost two hundred comrades lost their lives by drowning. Other comrades decided to hide along the banks of the river and survived, while others were trapped and shot by the enemy.

This indiscriminate shooting continued for about forty five minutes.

The enemy then got out of their trucks and were amazed to see the number of bodies lying about in the area between the parade ground and the kitchen. They inspected some of them to see if they were dead, and if they were not, they finished them off.

Some dying comrades who were shouting slogans or were scolding Nyathi, were first killed (struck) about their faces and finally shot dead. Morrison Nyathi had by then unmasked his face ... all the enemy forces had masks on their faces ... and told all the comrades who were injured to stand up with their hands raised and to surrender.

About three hundred comrades stood up.

They were ordered first to pick up the bodies of the girls and to heap them in one of the small barracks. This barrack was later burnt. Of the three hundred surviving comrades there were four girls who were still alive. One of them, Metsai Muhondo, was recognised by Nyathi as the girl who used to supply food to him and other comrades before he became a traitor. The four were ordered to find their own way to safety, if they could walk.

Firing Squad

The rest were ordered to sit down and contacts with Salisbury were then made through a walkie-talkie *(over over)*.

'We have killed five thousand terrorists at Nyadzonya. We have destroyed the whole camp and we have captured eight hundred, what must we do?'

The reply came swiftly: 'Kill them all.'

Seven enemy units with light machineguns, sub-machineguns and NATO rifles were lined up before the comrades.

Nyathi then addressed them, but someone interrupted.

'*Maili pasi na Nyathi nhasi mushati pamboli naye* – down with Nyathi today. Do not say forward with him.'

Nyathi ordered the comrade to say: '*Pamberi Nyathi* – forward Nyathi.' The comrade said: '*Pasi na Nyathi* – down with Nyathi.'

The comrade was shot instantly.

Two other comrades were then shot in the similar manner.

From the group they picked out six people, one former member of the Special Branch in Rhodesia, one former soldier in the Smith Army, one from Dhubula Detachment and three others who were considered fit and strong.

They were asked questions like: 'Where is Nhongo? Who is your best commander? Who knows the way to the farm?'

One comrade replied: 'Such information is not made available to the recruits.'

Nyathi ordered the firing to commence. As they fired the first shot, one comrade raced on the parade and shouted the slogan: '*Pamberi ne hondo* – forward with the war.' He was shot instantly. The fire was heavy.

Meanwhile a heavy wind called *Chemununuki* blew up on the parade area. A bird called *Chapunga* flew over the area and the bullets seemed to start passing over the heads of some of the comrades.

The firing stopped after three minutes, and after some repairs to a wheel on one of the trucks, they all drove off.

About twenty comrades survived this firing squad, and of those Costa Meda survived unharmed. The enemy forces stayed at Nyadzonya, for more than one hour.

The survivors

Those who managed to cross the Nyadzonya River formed several units with a view to seek help and shelter. Comrade Roy had a group of about six hundred comrades, Jinx had seven hundred and eighteen comrades and are still at Goromonzi, Comrade Dzapasi three hundred and ninety nine, comrades Tenhika and Susan had a group of about seventy five, while Comrades Emilio and Hambalaze had about four hundred. Comrade Chikakayi had a group of about two hundred.

Comrade Chityo took cover in the Nyadzonya River and spent three hours under water with only her head above the water. She finally crossed the river and spent the night in Haribi mountain, she returned to the camp the following day and cooked food for the hundreds of those who were injured.

Each of the above groups had several injured comrades, some in a very serious condition. Travelling was not easy. Some groups spent two days before they arrived at their destination, some even more.

The number of those who survived the shooting, or those who were slightly injured and not admitted to hospital, is three thousand nine hundred and nineteen made up as follows:

Male comrades	1,866
Female comrades	281
Red Guards	808
Others	648
Administration	7
Total	3,610

Comrades admitted in the other hospitals were three hundred and nine made up as follows:

Chimoio Quarters	26
Chimoio Hospital	100
Local clinic	122
Beira	71
Total	319

Roughly about one thousand and twenty eight comrades were either killed by the enemy fire or were drowned in the Nyadzonya River, or ran away from the camp after the massacre. And even if adjustments and allowances are made for those who were admitted in various hospitals, we still have about one thousand people missing.

Remarks

As mentioned elsewhere in this report, Nyadzonya base was unstrategically situated in a dangerous position, with the river itself forming a trap.

The necessary precaution for the protection and safety of the comrades had been taken. As indicated on the attached map, trenches were dug all around the camp, but a trench without the gun for protection is useless.

The enemy was highly organised, and most of the comrades who are alive today could have been victims of the enemy.

It must be noted that the comrades were anxious and are still anxious to go for training, and when they saw the trucks pulling in they thought that they were to be taken for training.

Most of the comrades had enough vigilance, this was proved by the fact that they were unsuccessfully ordering the comrades to get away from the trucks.

Not only that, but most of the comrades from Section Command level upwards, lost their lives while they were trying to save the lives of other comrades at the then monstrous Nyadzonya. Every comrade played his part in saving the lives of other comrades. It must be mentioned here again that the majority of the comrades had learned their individual tactics, and this was applied to their advantage.

Several requests for arms to protect the camp had been made by the administration without success, and no member of the administration could have been expected to perform wonders in saving the lives of the comrades without a gun. Moreover, Comrade Emilio, General Staff, had a pistol but it would have been impossible to defend the comrades with it. The pistol finally fell into the river whilst he was helping the comrades who were unable to swim. Our six guards at the main gate were empty handed and they were ordered to open the gate, and no one in their position could have resisted opening the gate.

A lot of mistaken ideas have to be corrected in order to put the record straight. After the shooting, Comrade Susan (survivor) repeated again and again that if *tranados* – trained men . . . had been at Nyadzonya, people would not have been killed. Her statement was also supported by Comrade Nherera.

It would have been an unbelievable miracle for one hundred *tranados* without guns to stop the firing of the enemy on the 9th.

In any case, Comrade Susan, although a *tranado* herself, had personally failed to stop the enemy fire!

While the Nyadzonya Administration were requesting arms, they were advised to demand from the Mozambique Government, the return of the *tranados. Tranados* without guns, however, are as useless and helpless as the untrained comrades. Moreover, the eight members of the Nyadzonya Administration were trained too . . . unless we speak of the Mhahau trained people as the only *tranados* in the organisation.

Frelimo soldiers

About fifty armed FRELIMO soldiers were stationed at Nyadzonya for security purposes. These people lacked vigilance and a sense of duty. Only three of them had guns on the 9th.

Some of them were highly drunk and useless.

Apart from a few shots that were returned to the enemy, no resistance was put up by them. Many lives could have been saved if they had returned fire.

One of them ran away leaving his sub-machinegun. One comrade picked it up but failed to operate it and finally surrendered it at Chimoio.

One FRELIMO soldier lost his life on the 9th.

Most of their guns were captured by the enemy, while some few others were burnt in the houses.

Their removal from our bases will not make us feel any worse for the lack of security protection that they offer us.

Attitude of the comrades

It should be mentioned once again that comrades only have one desire, to go for training. This desire more than strengthened after the massacre on the 9th instant. The attitude of the comrades towards the revolution is now much deeper than before. They are highly committed to the cause of liberation of Zimbabwe more than they ever were. Keeping them in bases often referred to as 'Refugee Camps' keeps on robbing them of their morale and their desire to concentrate seriously on revolutionary matters. The idea of keeping them unarmed and thereby making them easy targets and victims of an enemy is most unpalatable.

Our mass is beginning to show signs of defying authority. This is a direct result of the massacre of the 9th.

Comrades would be relieved if some of them will be given arms for the protection of the base.

N.B. The enemy forces were wearing FRELIMO and ZANLA uniforms.

August, 1976

Deceased comrades

	Male	Female	Children
Died of gunshot wounds	607	11	3
Drowned	32	10	12
Total	639	21	15

Total dead as at the 15/8/76	675
Wounded all in all	240

Total present before incident

Male	3,546
Female	393
Vatoto	707
Mass	604
Total	5,250

Captured by the enemy on the 9th August

1 Mujokochera
2 Romeo
3 Lovemore Madiorere
4 Maxwell Njetiez
5 Amen and another eleven whose names are unknown

The following witnessed the firing squad

1 Idi Muchapera
2 Velapi Mudzi
3 Kalulu Ndatembwa
4 Special Kanyau
5 Anna Gambura
6 Washington Madza
7 Douglas Muringani
8 Israel Moyo
9 Celeophas Nyodzi
10 Maparara Mabuna
11 Pesipanodya Chipoko
12 Zvenyika Chifamba.

Arrivals in July, 1976

	Male	Female
3/7/76	54	9
8/7/76	10	–
7.00 p.m.	14	10
13/7/76	17	2
13/7/76	57	2
16/7/76	72	18
17/7/76	9	–
Total	233	41

Taken from new arrivals: $3.45½ and $12.50 and two wrist watches.

Deserters who ran away

Detachment Rufaro	25
Detachment Chaminuka	6
Detachment Ujainaha	14
Detachment Dhubula	2
Detachment Kuwadzana	12
Total	59

More arrivals	Male	Female
	5	2

Taken from new arrivals $0.74½ and $435.00.

Forty three Comrades were brought in from Pungwe Bridge after having tried to run away from Chimoio Farm.

Reconnaissance Troop formed

Although reconnaissance had from time of formation been an integral part of the Selous Scout operational duties, a troop specializing in this, only came into being with the arrival in the Regiment of an officer named Chris Schollonberg.

Chris, or Schulie, as he was more commonly known, joined the Rhodesian Light Infantry as a sergeant and was subsequently commissioned as a second-lieutenant. From there he volunteered for the Special Air Service where he soon established a fine reputation for reconnaissance work, which he specialized in. During the course of carrying out a particularly fine piece of reconnaissance, he was awarded the Silver Cross of Rhodesia.

On completion of his first Army contract, he returned to South Africa, the land of his birth, to try civilian life once more, but it was not to his adventurous taste.

The first intimation I had of his return to Rhodesia was a telephone call from General Hickman, by then the Army Chief of Staff, asking if I was aware that Schulie was back in Rhodesia. He explained that Schulie had tried to rejoin the Special Air Service, but had wished to join on his own conditions, rather than on the more usual Special Air Service conditions!

Not very surprisingly, the Officer Commanding the Special Air Service did not find this acceptable.

General Hickman made it clear to me that while he accepted that Schulie had an unusually independent turn of mind for the military, he was still an officer of exceptionally high calibre and it was unthinkable the Army should turn him away. Bearing this in mind, he asked if I could find space for him in the Selous Scouts.

I could not disagree with General Hickman's assessment ... Schulie was the type of individualist I required in the Selous Scouts, so without further ado, I promised I'd find him and sound him out.

He was not difficult to locate, for he was already set on speaking to me.

He came right to the point with a certainly unusual proposition. He wished to become an officer in the Selous Scouts on a month to month contract basis ... and ... he refused point-blank to sign the usual three year contract. What was more, he made it clear he had no ambition to lead a troop, or carry any of the usual responsibilities of an officer whatsoever.

'I only wish to do reconnaissance ... nothing else ... and I don't want anyone telling me how to do it. Just give me the task and a completely open discretion ... and ... have someone handle the intelligence I bring in ... and ... handle the general organisation and administration. I will thereafter do my own thing as I see fit.'

'You mean by yourself?' I raised an eyebrow.

'Yes ... but, if you insist, I will be prepared to take one other man, at the most, with me on reconnaissance ... but ... I demand the right to personally vet his suitability.'

Well, this was indeed a turn up for the book. Three men had always been the acceptable minimum for reconnaissance patrols, because two men can carry the other should he be wounded. A two man patrol, however, would give a wounded man no chance of survival, particularly if the patrol was operating out of Rhodesia. There would only be two alternatives ... to be shot by his comrade ... or to shoot himself.

One man ... no ways!

I looked at him thoughtfully for a moment, then told him I would meet all his conditions except for the two men or even less composition of a reconnaissance team. On this, I was unbending.

When he realised I was totally adamant, he expounded his theory further.

'A three man team is too large and unwieldy ... the smaller the group, the safer it is. A man operating alone, which is my preference, has enormous advantages over the enemy. In the first place, they will never expect us to send one man on a solitary reconnaissance, which means their patrols will continue to pay attention only to the tracks of three or more men and not to the tracks of a lone man. Besides all that, it is easier for a man on his own to hide up ... he simply crawls underneath a bush and curls up. If his lying up place is discovered later, it will be taken for that of an animal. Above all, a man alone makes less noise and the knowledge he is totally on his own, makes him hypersensitive to his surroundings. He knows he is pitting wits against every other human being in the area and if he comes short, it will be entirely his own fault ... no one else's. If you go along with my idea, I promise you will never hear me call for a *hot* extraction. Besides, if I am compromised and they start hunting me, I will have all the advantages ... not them.'

'How do you make that out?' I asked, baffled by his logic.

'Because,' he answered devastatingly, 'I will know where they are and where I am, while they will only know where they are. They'll never catch me in a hundred years.'

I stood up, terminating the interview and we shook hands.

'I'm pretty sure it will be all right, but I'll have to confirm it with the General.'

Schulie turned to go and then hesitated.

'I'm a South African,' he added, 'which means I must insist on another condition. You must know I am of Afrikaans extraction, I don't want to work with Africans . . . I'm not saying they're not good soldiers . . . I just prefer not to work with them.'

I phoned General Hickman and put Schulie's conditions to him, pointing out that if I did take him on, it would hardly be fair for the Army to hold him against one of my officer posts, because that would immediately leave me a troop commander short.

'Agreed,' said General Hickman, 'I will arrange for him to be held against the Army pool . . . just sign him up quickly before he changes his mind.'

I took Schulie personally to Army Headquarters, which was perhaps a good thing, otherwise I doubt they would have let him through the gate. His ears were lost in the jungle which was his hair, while his shaggy beard almost totally obscured his face. His dress too, hardly conformed to the bowler hat and rolled umbrella image of a commissioned officer, but consisted instead of faded blue jeans, a T-shirt and sandals, home manufactured from a well worn car tyre. He did not either, affect the conceit of wearing socks on his feet, and to round off his certainly unusual apparel, a man's handbag drooped by a leather thong tied casually around his wrist.

I knocked on the door of the Chief of Staff's office.

General Hickman winced visibly on catching sight of Schulie's garb. I saluted having the real, although perhaps ridiculous, feeling that Schulie might have entered into the spirit of things and given the General a peace-sign.

General Hickman spoke to us for a few minutes and then hurried away on the excuse of having a prior appointment.

I afterwards led Schulie down the hallowed corridors of Army Headquarters to get him attested. I would be a liar if I said I didn't thoroughly enjoy the sight of the raised eyebrows of the red-hatted staff officers as they took in the amazing apparition, the like of which they had never seen in those august surrounds before. The silence which descended on the building seemed to be accented by the slop-slopping sounds of Schulie's sandals as he walked.

We walked into the office of a Major who dealt with the formalities associated with the attestation of officers into the Army. He was an officer noted for his zealous dedication to the compliance with the most obscure of Army rules and regulations.

He sniffed incredulously as we entered.

I noted the horrified expression on his almost purple face when I happily explained he was to prepare all the papers, and commission Schulie forthwith with the rank of captain.

'He was only a lieutenant when he resigned,' the Major said, after reverently consulting his records as if they were the oracle. 'In any case, you can hardly just barge in on me without a moment of notice and expect me to comply with requests like this. I wonder sometimes who you Selous Scouts really think you are!'

I smiled grimly at him. 'I believe I am a soldier, Major, which is why I never quibble when I'm given an order.' I held out my hand. 'May I use your telephone?'

I dialed General Hickman's extension. He answered almost immediately.

'I'm in Major . . .'s office, Sir, and he has strong objections to signing Schulie on.'

'Put the Major on the line, please,' gravelled the Chief of Staff.

I handed the telephone handset back to the Staff Officer, who put it gingerly to his ear as if it were a faulty Claymore mine. He listened in silence, his face visibly twisting in tortured misery.

'Yes, Sir,' he said finally, replacing the telephone. He shuffled his pen and pencil and looked distastefully at Schulie for a few moments, until a look of triumphant relief suddenly spread across his features.

'He hasn't even had a medical . . . I can't sign him on . . . I don't know if he's fit.'

'Schulie,' I ordered, 'blink your eyes.'

Schulie solemnly blinked his eyelids.

'There you are,' I said to the Staff Officer briskly, 'told you so . . . fit as a fiddle. Sign him up . . . you're wasting my time.'

The Selous Scouts had already added a new and highly successful dimension to counter insurgency operations, now Schulie in his turn, was to add yet another new dimension to the Selous Scouts . . . specialized reconnaissance and in that process he was destined later to become the first of the only two soldiers ever to be awarded the Rhodesian Grand Cross of Valour . . . the equivalent of the British Victoria Cross, or the American Congressional Medal of Honour.

Once Schulie was with us, a small nucleus of individualistic men, both black and white, soon gathered around him and external reconnaissances commenced in earnest.

I immediately discovered there were great advantages in having separate reconnaissance teams for external tasks, because it meant we could stop the old system of robbing Peter to pay Paul, disturbing the workings of pseudo teams by pulling personnel away from them for special jobs.

A few weeks after commencement, Schulie came to see me in my office.

'I've been thinking about the reconnaissance scene, Sir. I see now my thinking has been totally wrong . . . there is a tremendous potential for black soldiers on reconnaissance work, because they can go where a white man can't.'

I listened with considerable interest, because this was a complete about-turn by Schulie.

'Schulie,' I said, 'you have the pick of the unit . . . take anyone you want.'

'Well, Sir, I don't know any of the African soldiers yet . . . just select me a good guy whom you can recommend from your personal knowledge.'

I selected Trooper Rangutu, who was now the holder of the Silver Cross of Rhodesia.

Schulie took Trooper Rangutu on a small external reconnaissance. After their return I examined the debriefing report from Schulie and then awaited the right moment, when I was able to casually ask Rangutu how it had gone.

'Ah, *Ishe,*' he said in awe and admiration, 'that officer is another story.'

Schulie in his turn, was most impressed with Trooper Rangutu, but that vital and very necessary close rapport had not materialised between them.

Two men reconnaissance sticks, thereafter, became the normal way of operating in the Reconnaissance Troop and Schulie's theories, although unorthodox, had proved to be a great success in practice.

He was still not satisfied though, and after a few weeks, once more sought interview with me.

'We're limited in the depth we can penetrate into Mozambique and Zambia. We cannot use helicopters on deep penetrations, so the only other method available, is parachuting, which involves a good chance of compromise. This is, of course, because we are thinking wrong . . . we are parachuting in low to get in fast, working on the usual military theory that this saves us from being shot at. Trouble is, everybody hears the aircraft. I believe we should train the officers and men in the Reconnaissance Troop to use their parachutes to free-fall from a high altitude . . . skydiving as the civilians might call it. This way, although the enemy might still hear the aircraft, as it will be flying at an altitude above eighteen thousand feet, they will have no reason to suspect that paratroopers are being dropped . . . particularly if aircraft from a civil airline, normally overfly that vicinity.'

I needed no persuasion . . . the idea clearly had much merit, particularly in reconnaissance work. I wasted no time and, climbing into my car, went to see my friends in the Air Force to solicit their support . . . then carried on to Army Headquarters.

The next day my African Regimental Sergeant Major marched into my office, halted and saluted with an even greater formal efficiency than usual.

I acknowledged his salute and looked at him warily. It was obvious he had something on his mind.

'*Ishe,* I have heard there is to be a course on free-fall parachuting.'

'Yes, but only for the Reconnaissance Troop at this time.'

'*Ishe,* I wish to volunteer . . . it is right I should be the first.'

'Now hang on RSM,' I broke in firmly, anticipating what was coming, 'parachuting is one

thing, but this free-fall stuff from a dizzy height is definitely another. I appreciate your feelings, but this time for your own good, I must be firm. I'm afraid you cannot go on this course.'

'Ishe,' he began and I sat there with my face like iron, but internally my resolve was running away from me like sand in an hour glass, as he unashamedly wheedled, cajoled, pleaded and even threatened to leave the Unit and go on retirement.

After a few minutes of this, I was thoroughly beaten.

'Okay, okay, RSM,' I said, 'spare me the rhetoric . . . you're on the course.'

A few weeks later, I stood on the edge of the drop-zone, a pair of high powered binoculars glued to my eyes, as I watched the sky intently and with mounting apprehension.

Above me, a lumbering old C-47 Dakota . . . which had probably seen service in the Arnhem landings during the Second World War, and had almost certainly seen service in the Berlin Air Lift after that war . . . laboriously circled the airfield, gaining height for the first drop.

The Rhodesian Air Force instructor, Flight Lieutenant Frank Hales, an expert free-faller himself, stood beside me.

The old lady Dakota, having finally trundled its way up to the necessary eighteen thousand feet, commenced its first run.

Two small black dots suddenly appeared in sharp outline against the clear blue of the Rhodesian sky, as the African Regimental Sergeant Major and an instructor launched themselves into space. Frank Hales started counting out loud, and twenty two seconds later, two parachutes blossomed into flowers high above us. Soon afterwards the African Sergeant Major, his face split by a wide and delighted grin, landed nearby us to become the first African to parachute free-fall in Rhodesia. He was followed closely by the other seven African soldiers undergoing the course with him.

Free-fall gave added impetus to the Reconnaissance Troop as well as broadening their scope considerably, for targets deep inside enemy territory were immediately examined and plans laid and brought to hatching.

Schulie, as he had said in the beginning, had no wish to command the troop, but merely to operate on his own and perhaps help with tactics, so I appointed Captain Rob Warracker to command the troop. It was a command to which his marked talents and very quick mind were well suited.

The only major disadvantage we suffered from, it was one we were never to overcome, was that the Air Force did not possess any really sophisticated means of navigation and therefore, could only fly the reconnaissance teams in when there was enough moonlight for them to read the ground visually.

In the early stages, while we were still learning, the men suffered great hardships in trying to carry sufficient food with them in a pack. Eventually, we developed a box fitted with a small light which was pushed out first and followed down by the reconnaissance team. Attached to the box was a tiny explosive charge with a length of safety fuse. The detonation of the charge released a parachute strapped to the box . . . the distance of travel being dictated by the length of the safety fuse. When the parachute opened . . . which was normally at five thousand feet, the parachutist would pull his own ripcord and guide himself down so he landed close by his supply box.

The first few hours after landing were critical, as all signs of arrival had to be obliterated and a cache made for food reserves . . . normally ten days supply, while another ten had to be carried on the person . . . water and spare radio batteries.

The position of the cache had to be carefully marked to ensure it could be found again.

Once this had been achieved, the team would then put as much distance as possible between themselves and the dropping zone during the hours of darkness which remained, anti-tracking as they went.

At first light, they would go to ground and lie up for the daylight hours, unless the approach march to the target was through uninhabited areas, in which case they could carry on during the day too. Usually though, they moved only at night, because totally uninhabited areas were rare, and even in such areas there was always the ever-present danger of bumping into transients like

hunters. Movement by night was inevitably slow . . . sometimes in very thick bush or broken country, teams might only make eight hundred metres on some nights . . . but it was at least safe.

Operation Prawn: Attacks on Line of Rail: Barragem to Malvernia: August, 1976

Reconnaissance teams dropped in by free-fall parachuting and by helicopters along the line of rail, confirmed information to hand that ZANLA were making extensive and ever increasing use of Mozambique Railways to move large numbers of terrorists from Barragem to Mapai, and on to the border town of Malvernia, from where they would infiltrate into Rhodesia.

The use of the railway had shown a marked increase after we had destroyed or captured the bus fleet, previously used for moving terrorists to the border, during the Mapai raid.

The FRELIMO garrison at Malvernia had been reinforced and they were adopting a markedly more aggressive attitude towards the Rhodesian troops based in the little village of Vila Salazar, which was within shouting distance across the border.

Frequently, whenever they got jittery or felt they had a surplus of ammunition to waste, they mortared and shelled the village.

The Rhodesians were ordered to keep their heads down, but not to retaliate . . . in case it escalated the war!

I discussed the information our reconnaissance teams had brought in with the Special Operations Committee (SOC), and also the provocative situation pertaining at Vila Salazar. I urged that the Selous Scouts be allowed to cross into Mozambique and demolish the railway line piecemeal in a series of raids. The initial reaction, by some, to my proposals was tinted with a certain amount of horror, and one officer accused me outright of being a war-monger engaged in deliberately trying to escalate the conflict.

'The railway is an economic target, *not* a military one,' I was told.

I dug in my heels and pointed out the tonnage of war material and supplies one train could deliver right up to our own doorstep, which hardly kept it in an economic category.

The final decision which was arrived at after considerable argument and a lot of recriminations, was that we could mount attacks on the trains along this route, but only when ZANLA were actually seen to be using them. Then, a few days afterwards, some unusually large gangs of ZANLA terrorists were bumped well inland by Security Forces, and it became crystal clear to even the most cautious of those on the Special Operations Committee that they had come in via Malvernia . . . so . . . they threw caution to the wind and ordered us to neutralize the line.

I tasked Major Bert Sachse, commanding the fort at Chiredzi, to forthwith commence a concerted effort against the track. He did, but the general topography there . . . it was featureless and flat . . . did not lend itself to his sabotage efforts. There were no bridges or culverts in the area, so effecting repairs to damaged tracks was simplicity itself.

He sent in small teams by helicopter along the line of rail, but apart from two nicely successful train derailings, the whole exercise was virtually profitless.

We sat down in conference and reviewed what had been done, and what could still be done. Then we thrashed through the problem again until we finally concluded that the answer was to blow the track and derail at least three trains at different places along the line. Then, take out the only steam crane in Mozambique when it came from Maputo to crank the carriages back onto the repaired track. We felt that with three wrecked trains, with long intervals between them and the means of clearing the line reduced to scrap iron, we would have achieved our objective.

Because of the waterless terrain and the sandy nature of the veld in that part of Mozambique, which made anti-tracking virtually impossible, we were able to deploy the teams tasked with the demolitions only by helicopter.

Lieutenant Richard Pomford was detailed together with a force of seven men for the first strike.

Much time was spent with Rhodesia Railways, studying the construction of diesel locomotives, so the RPG-7 gunner would know where to place his shots for them to be the most effective.

An observation point was established on the water tower at Vila Salazar and kept there for several consecutive days, so a timetable of train movements across the border could be compiled.

The plan was for the ambush party to move by helicopter to a pre-selected dropping zone, twenty kilometres south of Malvernia and ten kilometres west of the railway line, and then to move at best possible speed to the line where they would lie up until ready to mount their attack. The biggest problem they faced was that the line was being patrolled at frequent but irregular intervals by FRELIMO, so they couldn't risk laying the charges too far in advance of a train's appearance in case they were discovered.

The observation post on the water tower at Vila Salazar would keep radio contact with Richard and tell him the moment a train left Malvernia. Then, when the train was heard approaching by the ambush party, they would move forward and take up position. After judging by guesswork when the train had reached the critical point, but was still far enough away for the crew not to spot the happenings ahead, two Scouts would quickly set the charges on the rail, and get back in cover.

If everything went as planned, then, as the train ground to a halt after the detonation had derailed it, the RPG-7 gunner would immediately fire two rockets into the locomotive's vitals to ensure it would never move again.

It worked perfectly so far as timings were concerned . . . but that was the only thing that did! For, as the demolition party were about to set their charges on the rail, a FRELIMO bicycle patrol suddenly appeared. It was too late to place the charges by the time the patrol had passed, so Lieutenant Pomford decided to rocket and machinegun the train as it passed his position.

One rocket scored a direct hit on the locomotive, but it missed all the vital spots, so it rumbled on by, our men firing long bursts of automatic fire into the carriages.

It was not a long train . . . a mere three carriages . . . and as the rear one drew parallel with the ambushers, they were subjected to a nasty surprise for it was sandbagged and manned by three FRELIMO soldiers armed with heavy and light machineguns, with which they returned a heavy and sustained fire from almost point-blank range, which continued until the train disappeared from sight around a bend.

Richard and his men hugged the ground as the hail of bullets thudded into the earth and sung through the bush around them. Fortunately, they suffered no casualties, but it was a very close call indeed. They did not wait to make a post mortem of events, but legged it back to the dropping zone to call for the helicopter to uplift them, so they could get clear before the FRELIMO converged onto their tracks.

It was a group of very disappointed and despondent Scouts who climbed from the helicopters back in Rhodesia and reported what had happened to Major Bert Sachse who was awaiting them. Their already edgy tempers were not improved when the local Brigadier strolled up and eyed them distastefully.

'You failed in your mission, didn't you?' he said.

Lieutenant Richard Pomford came close to insubordination, but frankly, I didn't blame him in the circumstances.

Ignoring the triumphant criticism which came to us from that and certain other quarters, we sat down again and re-studied the problem in the light of our recent experiences.

The observation post on the water tower at Vila Salazar, was kept in operation and the men performing this duty, reported noticing that every Tuesday morning an Alouette helicopter, painted yellow . . . the Rhodesian Air Force were also equipped with Alouette helicopters . . . flew up the line of rail to the Malvernia rail and road junction, from where it would then fly north-east and follow the powerline to the Troposcanner some twenty five kilometres away.

We checked radio intercepts to ascertain the purpose of these flights and discovered it was carrying an engineer from Maputo, on a weekly line inspection. The flight was always preceded by a radio warning telling the FRELIMO troops on the ground not to shoot it down. The yellow paint used made it easily distinguishable from the camouflage of its sisterly but more meanly aggressive Rhodesian war planes.

I spoke to the Rhodesian Air Force and as a result one of their helicopters was spray-painted a delightful canary yellow and for several weeks, while it wore this gaudy plumage, we were able to drop our reconnaissance sticks into Mozambique with total impunity, until one day the FRELIMO suddenly tumbled to what we had been doing and reacted with an angry fusillade.

We called it the *yellow submarine.*

FRELIMO quickly built up an extensive patrol system which made it difficult to get near the line undetected and several of our patrols had very narrow escapes.

As a consequence, all sorts of ploys were used to throw the FRELIMO off balance. On one occasion we prepared two sets of explosive charges and two helicopters were ordered to stand by. Contacts in the internal operational areas were happening daily and as soon as the next one was concluded, the body of a dead terrorist was collected and rushed by air to the Scout team standing by waiting for it. It was stripped, re-clad in Security Force camouflage and loaded in one of the helicopters, both of which then took off . . . each heading for different preselected spots on the railway line.

Bert Sachse and one Scout dropped down and unloaded the dead terrorist . . . now an unknowing and unprotesting pseudo member of the Security Forces. They set up a demolition charge on the track between the lines . . . so the explosion wouldn't damage the track and stop the next train . . . and then laid the body on the charge. They lit a short delay fuse and immediately re-emplaned in the helicopter and flew back to Rhodesia . . . their part in the operation was completed.

The other helicopter had meanwhile dropped off the second team further down the line where they took cover and waited.

Shortly afterwards they heard the dull thud of an explosion up the line.

As hoped, FRELIMO patrols from the whole sector immediately homed in towards it, and found exactly what we had intended them to find at the scene of the explosion . . . torn fragments of Security Force uniform and mangled bloody flesh . . . but the line was undamaged.

It was clearly the work of a Rhodesian saboteur who had accidentally, due to incompetence, blown himself up while preparing the charges.

Scattered around the area they discovered some terribly interesting, although unbeknown to them, bogus documents. The FRELIMO, wildly excited at having at last found some tangible evidence of Rhodesian involvement, gathered up what they could and rushed off en masse to the nearest post to report their findings, each intent on claiming credit or getting some of the reflected glory, leaving the line unprotected for the arrival of the next train which, needless to say, the second patrol promptly blew off the rails.

A few days after this, Bert Sachse again entered Mozambique and laid charges along eight hundred metres of railway line.

Just prior to detonation a train unexpectedly appeared from the direction of Malvernia. They attacked and set the diesel locomotive ablaze, the intense heat seizing its wheels and rendering it immovable . . . and so it remained where it was for the rest of the war, very effectively blocking the line so that no trains could run into Malvernia.

After this, supplies had to be transferred to trucks at the rail blockage point and taken by road to Malvernia, which put an immediate and impossible strain on FRELIMO's transport system.

At about the same time, to further add to the misery of FRELIMO and ZANLA, another team consisting of Lieutenant Tim Hallows, Piet van der Riet, Peter McNeilage and Sergeant George . . . all wearing FRELIMO uniforms . . . went into Mozambique with relative impunity in the *yellow submarine* helicopter, piloted by John Blythewood, and were dropped without incident on the line of rail between the power lines and Chicualacuala.

They stayed under cover while a train passed by on its way to Malvernia.

Rob Warracker, in a Lynx aircraft flying at high altitude, well away from the scene of the impending action so as not to arouse suspicion, watched the westward progress of the train which was pulling several large water bowsers as well as carriages . . . bowsers were the only means by which Malvernia could be supplied with water.

The demolition team set their charges, took up ambush positions and waited.

At 15h00, Rob Warracker warned them from the Lynx that the train had turned around and was on its return journey with empty bowsers and loaded coaches.

The locomotive was travelling fast and the explosion derailed it in a screech of agonised metal. The ambush party were horrified as it careened through the bush at them stopping only just short of their position. Peter McNeilage only narrowly missed being crushed to death by it.

The coaches were packed to capacity with FRELIMO troops, and many of them were killed or injured in the derailment. The survivors spilled from the wreckage ... some dazed and stunned ... others shouting or screaming in panic or pain.

The ambush party having nearly been overwhelmed by the train, were forced to abandon any ideas they had of putting in RPG-7 rockets as a *coupe de grace* and were forced to sprint from the scene in relative disorder to avoid a follow-up, but fortunately, the FRELIMO were far too demoralised and shattered to give pursuit a thought ... self preservation and survival was foremost in the minds of the uninjured ... and most, unwittingly, chose the same direction of flight as the ambush team.

Peter McNeilage, leading the team's disorganised retreat, glanced over his shoulder and saw to his horror, that not only was the surrounding bush alive with FRELIMO bent on putting as much distance as possible between themselves and the train, but that two of them were only five or six paces behind Piet van der Riet ... unbeknown to Piet.

Shouting a hurried warning to Piet van der Riet, Peter McNeilage turned and snap-shot both of the enemy, causing all the fleeing FRELIMO to turn and run in the opposite direction.

Rob Warracker, from his lofty perch, called for the return of John Blythewood's *yellow submarine.* John dropped into a very small landing zone indeed to pick up the team, tipping his rotars on the surrounding bush as he landed, but in spite of this, he managed the uplift and got back to Rhodesia safely.

Soon after this we heard from radio intercepts that large contingents of ZANLA terrorists had been shipped down the east coast from Dar-es-Salaam in Tanzania, and were being held at the small coastal town of Xai Xai. On hearing this, we re-doubled our efforts to neutralize the railway line between Barragem and Malvernia. If they were intent on infiltrating Rhodesia, we certainly weren't going to allow them to do it in comfort.

To the south of Barragem, a road and rail route ran across the summit of a dam wall. An enormous amount of explosives would have been needed to demolish it. To double our difficulty, this dam was sited actually on the outskirts of Barragem itself, which was by then a FRELIMO brigade headquarters, so the possibility of us placing large demolition charges in position without detection, was fairly remote.

A bridge to the north of Barragem offered better prospects. It was constructed of steel girders which immediately reduced the amount of explosives required. A close study of aerial photographs revealed the locality had little population. Additionally, a good dropping zone was close by as well as there being some fine navigational aids, in the way of landmarks, to work by.

The prospects for free-fall entry were very good, the only problem still besetting us, was how a two-man team could transport the large amount of explosives required from the dropping zone to the bridge, set the charges and then blast them ... all in one night.

After many long sessions of abortive discussions, the Selous Scouts' Motor Transport Officer appeared with a triumphant smile on his face and invited me to step over to his workshop. Once there, he unveiled a weird but intriguing looking vehicle resembling a space-buggy, which he and his men had constructed. It had a fairly lightweight frame and had been designed to carry the precise amount of explosives required to blow the bridge. To give it cross-country capability, they had fitted it with wide *fat-tackey* tyres and like its Beach-Buggy distant cousin, it was powered by a Volkswagen engine.

With this, the plan became relatively simple. Two men, the buggy and the explosives, would be dropped some twelve kilometres from the target. Once on the ground, the buggy would be

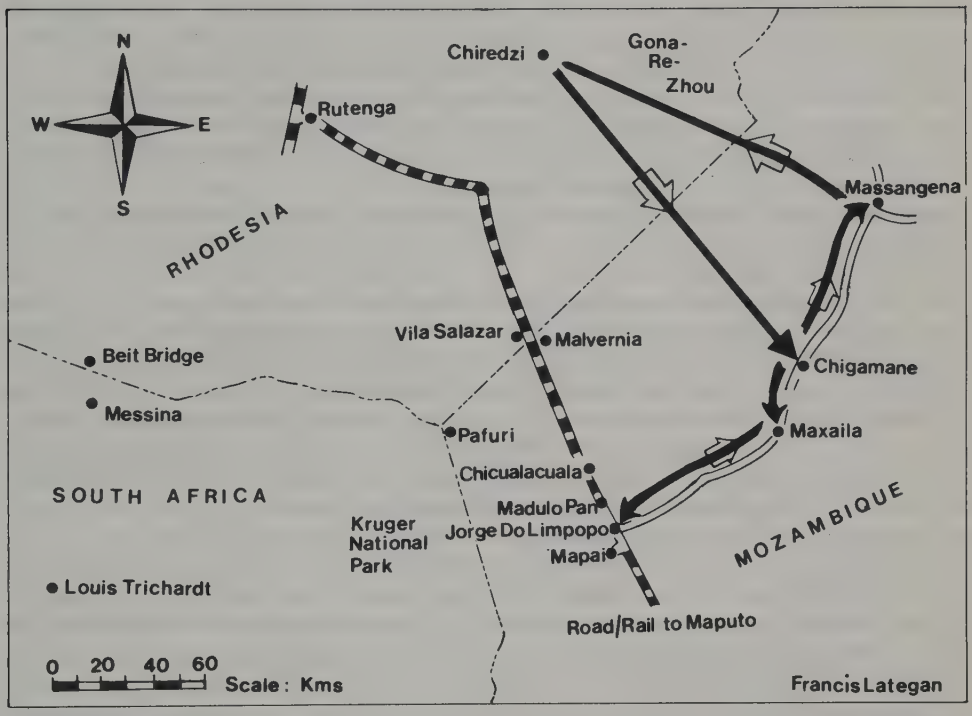
assembled from its breakdown kit . . . it took about half an hour . . . the explosives loaded and the demolition team would drive it to the bridge. The charges would be positioned and set according to a pre-worked out pattern, and then detonated.

All this could be achieved in one night without difficulty.

We took the plan to an advanced stage where dress rehearsals were about to begin, when the Special Operations Committee (SOC) unexpectedly ordered us to abort the plan, because it had finally been decided at top level, that the bridge was an economic target, not a military one.

They were wrong, and it was a great shame as it turned out, for later on in 1979, almost three years afterwards, a large conventional airborne operation was launched to knock-out the communications system in the Gaza Province . . . both the steel girder bridge and the route over the dam wall featured prominently as targets.

During that attack a helicopter carrying the Engineers' demolition party, was shot down by ground fire and twelve Rhodesian soldiers . . . including Captain Charlie Small, Selous Scout and Rhodesian Engineer . . . were tragically killed.



L7. Operation *Mardon*. Map of flying column attack on Jorge do Limpopo and Massangena: October/November 1976.

Operation Mardon: Attack on Jorge do Limpopo and Massangena: October/November, 1976

Captured terrorists confirmed that despite the harrassment we had subjected them to, and our continuing sabotage of the line of rail from Malvernia to Maputo, ZANLA terrorists were still coming in through Mozambique's Gaza Province in ever-increasing numbers . . . although they were now having to walk long distances where the railway had been put completely out of action.

We had heard too that the ZANLA camp at Mapai itself . . . which we had devastated in June . . . had been abandoned on the insistance of FRELIMO. They were clearly not at all keen that their troops should be subject to the further savage attentions of the Rhodesians on cross border raids . . . so . . . for this reason . . . ZANLA had moved camp to Jorge do Limpopo, which was closer to the line of rail and which dominated the many road routes converging on it.

To the terrorists though, a move of fourteen or so kilometres was neither here nor there . . . they still referred to it as the Mapai base.

Intelligence, which later turned out to be false, spoke of food shortages amongst the terrorists, as well as a lack of motor transport to deliver the little food they had.

I had had numerous discussions with those responsible for the Rhodesian conduct of the war, and everyone was most concerned with the infiltrations into the south-east, for they posed a clear threat to our lines of communication with South Africa. These infiltrations, had to be made more difficult . . . and if we could, Selous Scouts' thinking was, that as a matter of strategy, we should try to force ZANLA to infiltrate the bulk of their terrorists through the mountainous country of the Eastern Districts. The terrain there . . . completely opposite to the flat and monotonous south east . . . allowed good observation points for the Security Forces . . . giving them excellent killing grounds . . . which had incidentally, already been responsible for ripping savage holes in the ragged ranks of the ZANLA terrorist organisation.

It was for these prime reasons we were tasked once more to send a column into Mozambique to destroy logistics in the hope . . . that if FRELIMO themselves, were denied food and supplies . . . and the transportation means to relieve those shortages . . . then they would order ZANLA to move their operations north to our Eastern Districts, where we wanted them.

We immediately got to work putting another column together. This time, because of a continuing pattern of breakdowns and mechanical problems, we decided in view of their ripe old age, to dispense with the Ferret armoured cars . . . to the unbridled joy, I might add, of the Officer Commanding, the Armoured Car Regiment.

However, we needed something to beef up the column as a matter of essentiality . . . for we knew that FRELIMO in Gaza Province had been heavily reinforced with both men and heavy weapons, so we cast around for alternatives.

We had a good alternative in mind too, for it had not escaped our all-seeing and ever enquiring acquisitive notice that a new model and very effective armoured car, the Eland, had taken its place in the order of battle of the Rhodesian Army. We had almost drooled on seeing its main armament . . . a powerful and very accurate ninety millimetre gun.

I immediately made friendly overtures to Army Headquarters . . . known as snivelling around in Army slang . . . to get possession of two Elands for the column, but my overtures, friendly or not, were turned down firmly . . . without recourse to appeal too . . . on the grounds that if one were captured while on an external raid, it would seriously embarrass the supplier country who had been kind enough to make them available to Rhodesia.

Accepting the situation with reluctance, we cast our eyes around for an alternative . . . the Ferrets were definitely more trouble than they were worth . . . and at one stage during this desperate search of ours, it looked as if we'd have to dispense altogether with having armoured vehicles as the tempered steel tip of the column. We became resigned to the idea of using only Unimogs . . . with armour plate bolted to the sides for additional protection . . . not very satisfactory, but what could we do?

Then, the Motor Transport Officer, Captain Malley, who was ever alive with ingenious ideas, appeared at my office with a smug smile. In his hands were a clutch of documents which turned out to be the detailed drawings of a West German APC – armoured personnel carrier, which incorporated the engine and the chassis of a Mercedes Unimog.

Captain Malley had once worked on the job of Army procurements . . . which explained how the plans had come into his hands.

I checked it over with Captain Malley and then spoke to a certain desk-bound senior officer at Army Headquarters.

'My God,' he said aghast, 'what about copyright?'

What about it indeed . . . but after discussions we decided that the little issue of copyright could look after itself . . . when the war was over!

I reached for the telephone and made arrangements for an immediate delivery of armoured plate, and for the call-up of eight Territorial Army members of the Selous Scouts, who were

skilled in things mechanical to aid our own regular staff, and they soon set about constructing our very own armoured personnel carriers.

The Territorials, plus our regular mechanics, worked day and night in continuous shifts for three weeks, finishing the last of the home-made armoured personnel carriers only a few days before the operation commenced.

We armed each with twenty millimetre Hispano cannons from the old Vampires.

They were superbly finished and turned out to be quite excellent vehicles and certainly far superior to the old British Ferret scout cars.

I don't remember what the Germans called them . . . I know it was a name as militarily hard as a bullet, but we could hardly call them that, so we named them to coincide with what they actually looked like . . . the Pigs.

We had a very limited choice of routes into Mozambique . . . we were governed by its undeveloped geography . . . but we nevertheless decided it would be asking for trouble to use the same route taken by the Mapai column, although, as it turned out, we could have done so with impunity.

Instead, we decided to take the route used by Lieutenant Tim Baxter for our first mini-column foray to Chigamane in May.

Jorge do Limpopo was to be our prime target.

In order to give the column early warning of enemy reinforcements moving towards Jorge do Limpopo while the attack was under way, we planned for two reconnaissance teams to be dropped along the line of rail . . . one to the north and one to the south of the town.

The plan we developed was that fourteen days prior to the column's entry into Mozambique, which was scheduled for Sunday the 31st October, two reconnaissance teams would be deployed by free-fall parachute entry into Mozambique.

The first team, consisting of three European Selous Scouts, was to be positioned in the area south of Jorge do Limpopo . . . a hundred kilometres from the Rhodesian border . . . while the second team, consisting of Schulie and Sergeant Mpoto, would be positioned north of the town about eighty kilometres from the Rhodesian border.

Both teams had orders to make their respective ways to the railway line and parallel road and mount observations, noting the type and volume of traffic using them.

As soon as the column entered Mozambique, the teams were to derail the first trains passing their positions, using explosive charges. In addition, they would set claymore mine ambushes in the road and cut the telephone lines to isolate the garrison at Jorge do Limpopo from ready assistance.

The column, under the command of Captain Rob Warracker, would enter Mozambique along a little-used track north of Malvernia which, a hundred kilometres inland, bisected the road leading south and then south-west from Massangena to Jorge do Limpopo. On route they would take out the little terrorist staging post of Chigamane . . . which already held the dubious distinction of being the first ever place in Mozambique to receive Selous Scouts' attention during our mini-column raid . . . and another ZANLA staging post and small FRELIMO garrison at Maxaila.

After dealing with the prime target of Jorge do Limpopo, the column would uplift both reconnaissance teams who would remain with the column for the remainder of the operation.

Having achieved this, the column would retrace their steps through Maxaila and Chigamane and head for Massangena on the banks of the Save River, where they would mount an attack on a ZANLA staging post known to be there.

The proposed round trip for this fighting column would be about three hundred and fifty, to four hundred kilometres.

Due to the bad weather, the reconnaissance teams were deployed a day later than scheduled.

It must be stressed again that the countryside in that part of the Gaza Province is flat and featureless . . . with no landmarks to navigate by . . . so it was very difficult for the *Blues* to be precise on dropping zones.

Schulie's team were, in consequence, dropped seven kilometres from the intended drop zone, but they were nevertheless soon able to take up a position from where they could observe the road and railway line.

The second team though ... consisting of three men ... were dropped well away from the target area, thirty six kilometres further south along the railway line, in fact, but they were not aware of this when they took up their observation position.

The column crossed into Mozambique during the night of Saturday the 30th October, but their time schedule was soon put out. FRELIMO had, unbeknown to us, put small ambush parties on all tracks in their border areas ... it was clear they had learned at least some lessons from our incursions, and these ambushes took some time for the Selous Scouts to clear.

The column drove into Chigamane and stopped. The FRELIMO garrison and a few ZANLA terrorists came running over to the column shouting and laughing.

'Viva FRELIMO,' they yelled happily, clearly mistaking the identity of the men on the column.

Then, one of them recognised one of the men as a European, in spite of his blackened face ... and he turned and fled shouting warnings as he did so, the others quickly following suit.

The column opened fire with all guns and soon all enemy resistance had ceased.

After searching the place and picking up what weapons and documents they could find, the column moved on to Maxaila, just outside of which they shot up a FRELIMO vehicle, which meant, unfortunately, that when they drove into the village it was empty ... the FRELIMO and ZANLA defenders had fled.

At the villages along route, all the villagers danced and waved as they passed by, little appreciating that they were waving at Rhodesians.

Unfortunately, because of the delays, instead of arriving at Jorge do Limpopo at first light on the 31st October, they arrived only just before last light.

On the outskirts of Jorge do Limpopo ... where the road crossed the railway line ... the column halted briefly to allow Colour Sergeant Mike Kerr's mortar team to get themselves into position. The plan was for them to fire straight down the railway line over the heads of the column as they charged helter skelter into town.

The mortar teams, their eyes intent on the progress of the column as it made its way to mount the attack and, because of the gathering darkness, failed to notice that an unsuspecting FRELIMO section engaged in patrolling the railway line, had come right up and were almost upon them.

'Hey, Jorge! Hey, Jorge!' shouted out one of the FRELIMO ... it was the Scouts' first intimation of trouble.

'No, it's not George,' said one of the Scouts still not comprehending their challengers were a FRELIMO patrol, 'it's Cullum.'

The FRELIMO immediately tumbled to what was happening and opened fire with smallarms on the mortar line.

To bedevil things further, it was at this precise moment that a thunderstorm of gunfire opened up in the town itself ... so the mortars opened up too, and most of the mortarmen weren't even aware of the presence of the FRELIMO patrol, so consequently, when the bullets started to skid into the ground around them, they assumed it was return fire from the town itself.

The situation could have become extremely ugly ... the mortar teams could have been wiped out ... but fortunately, as was usual, the FRELIMO decided against pressing home an attack and took to their heels.

The column had driven into town at top speed and surprised a troop train ... containing thirty six ZANLA terrorists ... which was about to move into the station, so they blasted it at point-blank range with a mixture of twenty millimetre cannons and smallarms fire, and it almost immediately caught alight and started to blaze.

The Scouts then spread out inside Jorge do Limpopo blowing up a large water reservoir, the railway switching points, and burning every vehicle found.

The water reservoir was particularly important, as there was no water at Malvernia, all supplies having to be transported from Jorge do Limpopo.

The reconnaissance teams too had been busy since first light. The three-man team south of Jorge do Limpopo laid their charges on the railway line, cut the telephone wires, then settled down to monitor enemy traffic until they were picked up by the column, still totally unaware that they had been dropped thirty six kilometres south of the correct dropping zone.

Schulie and Mpoto . . . unaware the column was behind schedule . . . routinely carried out their appointed first-thing-in-the-morning tasks of cutting the telephone lines, but then decided as they were in a fairly well populated area, to take more positive measures to attract attention away from the column which, they assumed, was either about to arrive or had already arrived at Jorge do Limpopo.

They set up a claymore mine in a tree and afterwards went deliberately out of their way to ensure they were observed by the tribesmen at a nearby village.

Watching this village afterwards from a place of concealment, they saw four men leaving it in a hurry, presumably to report to the local FRELIMO.

At 12h30, a FRELIMO Land-Rover, with men in the back, was seen approaching at top speed from the direction of Jorge do Limpopo . . . it was clearly a patrol on its way to investigate the report of suspicious strangers.

As it passed beneath the tree Schulie detonated the claymore, the explosion wreaking havoc amongst the soldiers in the back. The driver, nevertheless, kept going until he was out of sight of the ambushers, his Land-Rover jiving madly from side to side as he battled to regain proper control.

We never discovered the full number of casualties suffered by FRELIMO in this incident, but a capture told us long afterwards the FRELIMO commander at Jorge do Limpopo had died in the blast.

Then, about an hour after their first trap had sprung, something totally unexpected happened . . . a train arrived and stopped near the village and the scouts looked at it curiously . . . then, at least thirty heavily-armed FRELIMO soldiers de-trained and commenced casting for spoor.

Criss-crossing the road, moving back to observe their tracks at times, to see if the FRELIMO had picked up their spoor, Schulie and Mpoto initially made off in a northerly direction.

When they were some five hundred metres from the stationery train, they heard the growl of a lorry approaching from the north and, being unable to resist it, they set up another claymore ambush with almost indecent haste. As they raced for cover it detonated, killing and wounding a large number of uniformed men who had been packed in the back, and who obviously had been about to assist in the search for the reconnaissance team.

From radio intercepts later we learned that this had been a good hit indeed . . . as all the passengers had been ZANLA terrorists from the Madulo Pan base.

This explosion made FRELIMO even more angry and by 16h30 the Scouts found themselves in contact with a large number of the enemy . . . a hectic and grim chase ensued, during the course of which Schulie and Mpoto, both being subjected to heavy gunfire, split up.

The hot pursuit by FRELIMO lasted until darkness fell when they lost the spoor . . . until then, they had experienced no difficulty in following the Scouts' spoor at a run . . . the soft sand in the area made tracking easy and anti-tracking impossible.

Meanwhile, after neutralising Jorge do Limpopo, Rob Warracker sent a vehicle south along the line of rail to pick up the three-man reconnaissance team, but after going a long way . . . further than they were supposed to . . . they returned back to the column and reported they'd found no signs of the team whatsoever.

Before being split up from Mpoto, Schulie had been in brief radio contact with Rob Warracker, who by then, was still heading for Jorge do Limpopo, but after the split-up and by the time he had shaken off his pursuers, Schulie could no longer raise anyone on his radio as the batteries were all but flat.

The column had, meanwhile, been hearing the sounds of considerable gunfire to the north where Schulie and Mpoto were, but in spite of frantic efforts they could get no radio response.

After dark, when the firing had died down, Rob sent Richard Pomford north with a detached patrol, but they found no visible signs of them or any answers to their constant radio calls. Before reluctantly returning to Rob Warracker to report failure, they shot-up and destroyed an empty train standing in a siding ... presumably the one which had brought up the troops who were searching for Schulie and Mpoto.

I listened in the Inkomo operations room as Rob came through to me on the radio at only strength-1. He told me what had transpired, mentioning that the three man reconnaissance team couldn't be located, and had almost certainly been killed or captured ... and it looked as if the same disaster had overtaken Schulie and his half-section too.

Consequently, he told me, he saw no further point in hanging around because he doubted it would do any good ... so ... he intended pulling out of Jorge do Limpopo that night to head for Massangena so he could mount an attack on it at first light.

'Rob,' I said, terribly concerned, 'I want you to stay right where you are ... I'm getting a Canberra bomber up immediately to see if he can find out what the story is ... your main objective must be to recover those men ... I will arrange to parachute in another hundred men tomorrow if it becomes necessary, and if I can get clearance ... meantime, make another attempt to locate the three-man reconnaissance team ... send another patrol as far south as they can reasonably go.'

An hour afterwards a Canberra bomber was circling Schulie's last known position at an altitude of thirty thousand feet.

Schulie heard the hushed whisper of the Canberra overhead and called up the very relieved pilot on his radio.

'Have you got air photograph number .. ?' his voice scratched through weakly because of the flat radio batteries. 'I've had to drop everything else.'

'Affirmative,' acknowledged the pilot.

'Okay,' murmured Schulie distantly, 'see the bottom right hand corner ... can you see a dried up pan?'

'Roger,' said the pilot.

'Well,' said Schulie, 'I'm on the southern side of that pan ... and tell the chopper pilot to be careful with his map-reading ... my radio batteries will be dead by tomorrow morning ... I doubt I'll be able to call him ... but that is where he will find me ... its just me alone ... I think my half-section has been captured.'

The pilot relayed Schulie's message to me via Rob Warracker, and I immediately organised a helicopter to up-lift him at first light.

A search-patrol led by Lieutenant Richard Pomford, drove far south in pitch darkness, constantly calling up the men of the still missing three-man reconnaissance team.

Eventually, they stopped, having travelled much further than they had been briefed to do. Richard hesitated ... verging on giving the order to return to Jorge do Limpopo ... but something inexplicable urged him to continue for just a few more kilometres.

Eight kilometres further on, a hoarse whisper came over the radio.

'Zero-Whiskey ... this is Tango-Two ... do you read?'

It was the missing team ... a very relieved team too ... they had been waterless for two days and had given up the column for lost.

The next morning, just after first light, a helicopter, escorted by a fixed-wing aircraft, arrived over Schulie's position, taking care to keep well away from the area of the railway line which was still a hot-bed of angry FRELIMO activity.

Schulie called them ... his transmission barely readable ... his radio batteries almost flat.

The helicopter swooped swiftly down and picked him up ... as they gained altitude after take-off, the still-searching FRELIMO directed an angry barrage of gunfire up at them, which proved ineffective.

The sun was beginning to rise above the eastern horizon as the helicopter turned and made for home following the railway line north.

Schulie looked at the course being taken by the helicopter with unease . . . the FRELIMO would be thoroughly aroused, and there were bound to be patrols along the line of rail who would shoot up at them . . . it seemed unnecessarily dangerous, and Schulie had been through enough danger in the past two days to keep him sated for a spell.

Shouting to make himself heard, he forcibly made his views known to first the gunner/technician and then the pilot, but all he got for his pains was a grin and a thumbs-up sign.

The gunner, who was strapped to his beloved guns, explained:

'Some Freds at a siding about four kilometres south of the powerlines tried to shoot us down on our way in . . . the boss is going back the same way to give 'em a good rev . . . sod this bull of taking avoiding action!'

Shortly afterwards, when they were some forty five kilometres closer to Rhodesia, the pilot called Schulie on the intercom.

'Someone's down there on the railway line . . . he's waving something white.'

Schulie feeling depressed by the horrible conviction that his friend and partner, Sergeant Mpoto, was dead . . . glanced down.

'Can you go lower so I can get a better look?' he asked excitedly, 'I don't see how . . . considering the distance from where we split up, but I think its Mpoto.'

As the helicopter dropped down Schulie saw it was indeed Mpoto . . . he was standing between the tracks leaping up and down, while wildly circling a map-sheet above his head to attract attention.

Sergeant Mpoto clambered aboard, and the pilot told afterwards how he experienced a strange tightening of his throat as he saw the two Africans . . . a big and well-muscled black Matabele and a big and well-muscled white South African . . . hugging each other emotionally like long-lost brothers in the absolute relief at discovering the other had survived.

So, although the helicopter crew didn't, after all, manage the counter-attack on the FRELIMO who'd shot at them, their disobedience of orders probably saved Mpoto's life.

There was little doubt that Schulie's and Mpoto's diversion not only caused FRELIMO and ZANLA considerable casualties, but it also . . . and perhaps more importantly . . . kept their attention away from the column, enabling them to attack and afterwards leave Jorge do Limpopo with little interference.

That dawn also found the column en route to Massangena, everyone hoping, not very optimistically, that the delay they had been subjected to had not served to alert FRELIMO . . . that FRELIMO were not ready and waiting for the column . . . now they were twenty four hours behind schedule.

Speed had always been important . . . now it was vital . . . for it seemed impossible to even remotely comprehend that FRELIMO, after our previous bold incursions into their country, had not evolved a fire-alarm plan whereby, on a signal, they could ambush, landmine and block every exit point back to Rhodesia, so they could set to and systematically wipe the column out.

To make it easier for FRELIMO too, there was hardly a surfeit of roads to choose for staking out.

'When will we run into them?' was the unspoken question hovering on everyone's lips.

To support these uneasy feelings that the FRELIMO were busily laying on a host of nasty surprises further along route, was the disturbing fact that the villages . . . all of them . . . were deserted . . . absolutely deserted.

The Selous Scouts in the lead vehicles scanned the road ahead continually, ever vigilant, their bloodshot and weary eyes searching for disturbances in the road surface, indicating newly laid landmines, or an unguarded movement in the bush revealing that an ambush was about to be sprung.

A few kilometres outside Jorge do Limpopo they encountered a FRELIMO Land-Rover heading towards them.

The driver . . . once he came to the dreadful realisation of whom he was driving at head-on . . . desperately attempted evasive action, but both he and his vehicle were shot to pieces as every gun in the column which could be brought to bear, opened up.

On checking the wreckage he was identified as the FRELIMO Paymaster returning from a trip to Massangena, where he had been paying out the garrison's wages . . . a large bag containing cash in the way of thousands of escudos, which he no longer needed, was taken into the safe custodyship of the column.

Most of the money was handed over to Superintendent Mac McGuinness afterwards, for use during future cross-border operations.

Just before entering Chigamane they found a bus abandoned by the side of the road. Inside the cab, neatly folded on the seat, was the driver's peaked cap and uniform coat. It was clear he'd had warning we were coming and decided discretion was the better part of bus driving.

After a hurried council of war, it was decided the bus was just the thing needed to give the column an innocent front, as the roads were very narrow and the bush should block any ambusher's view of the column behind, so a Scout put on the coat and cap and got in the cab.

A few kilometres before they reached the Massangena airfield, the column stopped to question some locals working in the fields so they could find out what FRELIMO were up to.

One old African gentleman proved most affable and was delighted to talk to the Selous Scouts. He was even more affable when, to his astonishment, he was handed several years of income in the way of a fat wad of escudo notes . . . ex FRELIMO funds.

He was so overcome by his newly acquired wealth, that when he heard the column's destination, he immediately volunteered the information that a FRELIMO ambush was in position and awaiting their arrival at the airfield.

This could only mean that Massangena had been warned of the column's imminent arrival by radio . . . which made it highly unlikely that the small ZANLA transit camp sited on the banks of the Save River opposite Massangena, would still be occupied.

Forewarned being forearmed, the column moved off once more, the bus occupying its place of honour up front.

Just before the ambush the driver saw a FRELIMO officer step into the road . . . apparently from the ambush . . . and hold his hand up to stop the bus which, it was clear, was the last vehicle he had been expecting.

Then, a few hundred metres from the ambush position, the bus, as had been pre-planned, pulled over to the side, and the rest of the column, led by two very mean Pigs, their Hispano cannons punching out a stream of heavy shells, went through.

The FRELIMO were caught completely on the wrong foot . . . such was the confusion that as they ran in all directions, many were unintentionally shooting at each other or into the air.

One FRELIMO soldier . . . either bolder than the rest or alternatively not understanding the depth of the trouble he was in as did the rest, decided to stand out in the open and take on one of the Pigs in single combat.

He braced himself to fire his RPG-7 rocket launcher . . . just as the Pig turned to run him down at top speed. He panicked and attempted to run backwards and fire his weapon at the same time. He succeeded in both endeavours but fell backwards, his weapon firing into the sky, the back-blast searing his back . . . then the Pig ran him down.

Having put the ambushers to flight and having scooped up a lot of weapons . . . including an anti-tank rifle . . . the column continued into town.

The few defenders were soon dealt with and the Scouts got down to searching the buildings for documents which might be of use, as well as weapons and war material.

A skirmish developed as Lieutenant Richard Pomford crossed the Save River to get to the ZANLA camp, during the course of which, two ZANLA terrorists were shot dead.

In the ZANLA base a large stockpile of weapons, ammunition and documents were captured and loaded into the bus.

Afterwards, the column got back on the road and took course for the border.

During that evening, the 1st of November, the column laagered up for the night at a point just under halfway to the border, and the next morning, the 2nd of November, they crossed back into Rhodesia without incident.

The aims of their mission, to destroy the logistics and disrupt communications between Jorge do Limpopo, Malvernia and Massangena had clearly been achieved, and achieved well.

The railway line, already blocked and clogged between Malvernia and Jorge do Limpopo by the wreckage of two trains, with another wrecked in the railway station of Jorge do Limpopo itself . . . was unusable between those points.

Additionally, all the roads travelled by the column had been heavily seeded with landmines.

At Massangena and Jorge do Limpopo all motor transport had either been destroyed or captured.

The immediate effects were that the ZANLA terrorist organisation in the Gaza Province who, until recently, had been able to truck or haul unlimited tons of war equipment to the actual border at will, now had to tramp the last ninety kilometres on foot . . . after first finding porters – normally women . . . and set up soft-target transit camps on the line of route to accommodate them.

The morale of the terrorists, we heard, sagged decidedly on realising they were no longer safe . . . even in Mozambique.

Yet, incredibly, on the Rhodesian side, there remained some senior officers, notably the Brigadier commanding the *Repulse* operational area, where our actions were going to have the best effect, who openly derided the effectiveness of our column operations.

'. . . but where are the kills . . ?' he and the rest kept asking.

I grew tired of trying to show them that destroying enemy logistics . . . taking the war to the enemy rear bases, could likely have a far better effect than the killing of individual terrorists.

Jorge do Limpopo: Train Wrecking

Two weeks later after the devastating success of our column, Schulie and Mpoto entered Mozambique some twenty kilometres south of Jorge do Limpopo by free-fall entry.

The permanent way at Jorge do Limpopo had been repaired by gangs working around the clock, and trains were once more running between Barragem and Jorge do Limpopo, from where the ZANLA terrorists would de-train and commence their long walk along the Nuanetsi River, through thick bush to the Rhodesian border.

The reconnaissance team, using special demolition charges, developed as a result of our previous experiences, derailed a train travelling at speed which was thoroughly wrecked. With this, the FRELIMO had now lost four locomotives with the attendant rolling stock, and this proved to be the final straw. They made no further efforts to use this line again until the latter stages of 1979. We could now report with some pride, that over one hundred and twenty kilometres of railway line was permanently out of operation.

Operation Ignition: Destroy ZIPRA House in Francistown: November, 1976

ZIPRA/ZAPU had suffered some major reverses in their southern front as a result of Selous Scout activities, and were experiencing considerable difficulty in getting their organisation smoothly functioning once more.

Although better trained and better equipped they were nowhere near as effective as ZANLA, who by that time, had large areas of Rhodesia covered by the umbrella of their baleful influence.

Special Branch informers in Francistown passed back the news that ZIPRA had received a large quantity of suitcase bombs from the Russians, which in their way of Soviet/African cultural exchanges were to be used to initiate a terror campaign in the major Rhodesian towns. Some of those indiscriminately deadly devices had already been recovered in the Bulawayo area by Special Branch, as a result of a tip-off.

Understandable concern was expressed both in Government and at the command levels of the

Security Forces as to the adverse effect such a campaign would have on the morale of the European population, which had already taken a battering from increased military call-ups.

The Rhodesian Foreign Affairs Department had approached their Botswana counterparts through diplomatic channels on this sensitive issue, and had put them in the picture as to what ZIPRA was doing. Botswana, not unexpectedly, declined to accept the veracity of the information.

And so a new and interesting task came to the Selous Scouts to handle.

After being fully briefed on the circumstances we got down to formulating a plan of action . . . we considered many . . . but the final one which we all liked was to pay ZIPRA out in their own coin. We decided to use the Russian made suitcase bombs, recovered by the Bulawayo Special Branch, to demolish the enemy's headquarters in Francistown. As well as demoralising them this could leave us with another practical bonus . . . Botswana might become alarmed at the idea of the war escalating into their territory and clamp some long overdue curbs on ZIPRA activity.

ZIPRA had acquired a new headquarters in Francistown since our earlier anti-social visits; and, acccording to Special Branch information, it seemed highly unlikely we would be able to smuggle in a suitcase bomb without detection . . . all visitors were security screened and physically checked over by guards, before being allowed in.

We checked through their systems and routines, as far as we knew them, with a fine-toothed comb, looking for a weakness we could turn to our own benefit. There was nothing . . . no weakness we could exploit by guile . . . it seemed as if we would have to use the suitcases elsewhere.

At first we had ignored the night security . . . we needed to get our suitcases inside and leave them there until they detonated . . . we could only do that by day, unless the guards fell asleep or unless . . .

It was only then we discovered where the weakness in their security system lay . . . it was almost unbelievable . . . but they weren't posting *any* guards at all during the night hours.

Four suitcase bombs of ponderous Russian technology were taken over from the Special Branch and refashioned by our technicians with considerable ingenuity, until they were powerful claymore mines.

Their calculations showed that each bomb possessed over twice the explosive capability required to demolish the ZIPRA house. They fitted each with a cunning device whereby they could be activated by a radio signal at least a kilometre away from the target. As a failsafe, in case of malfunction, alternative means had been added to enable them to be initiated manually.

Entry into the premises was to be made either through, or by climbing over the security fence during the hours of darkness. Once over, the bombs would be laid against different sides of the house, and our men would withdraw to a safe distance and detonate the charges.

Once clear of town, the team would return to Rhodesia by one of the many bush tracks leading to the border.

It was essential the operation be slick, as the Botswana Police had established a para-military post dominating the only road leading to the ZIPRA house. If they were alarmed and stirred up, the situation for the raiders could become ugly.

Rehearsals were held using a house similar to the target premises, and it was during these it was discovered the suitcase bombs, with their extra weight of explosives, were far too heavy for a person to manhandle over obstacles. A harness was then devised to enable them to be carried by two men.

The callsign, under command of Captain Neil Kriel, moved down to a farm close to the Botswana border on the 16th November.

A final briefing session was held with the Special Branch, and their source of information from Botswana, and all points that could possibly be pertinent to the operation were carefully gone through.

The electronic radio activating devices were given a final check on the morning of the 18th

November and, on the same evening, an African Scout checked the border crossing-point to ensure it was secure. Then, at 18h30, a three man all-African reconnaissance team crossed the border to check the entrance road into Botswana, returning at 20h00 to report all was well.

At 21h15 two Land-Rovers, with Botswana number plates, drove over the border carrying a team of four European and five African Scouts. Using little frequented dirt tracks they cut inland until they bisected the main road.

At 01h15 they drove into the outskirts of a quiet and sleeping Francistown, noticing uneasily as they drove past the Francistown Police Station that a lot of lights were on, and that there was a lot of unexplained activity going on within the security fence. Keeping their fingers firmly crossed, they drove on past to the target.

Some distance from the house they separately parked the Land-Rovers and worked cautiously towards it, one of the African Scouts going ahead with a bag of poisoned meat to feed to the dogs, who were ranging loose within the confines of the security fence.

Unfortunately, there were many more dogs than the Special Branch source had indicated . . . so there was insufficient poisoned meat . . . they would still have to contend with the danger of barking dogs. And so we learned once more by the hard method, that we should always do our own reconnaissance rather than rely on the words of sources or outsiders.

While they were hurriedly conferring on how to tackle the canine problem, something even more traumatic occurred . . . the check light on the radio initiation set started to glow red.

It meant that something was operating on the same frequency as our detonating wave . . . it could have been anything from a TV to a Police two-way radio . . . any move to arm the radio activating device would have triggered the bombs off.

They gave each other hunted looks of anguished chagrin. What should they do?

'We've come this far . . . if we call it off we've only got to come back!' said Neil Kriel, summing up the feelings of them all.

One of the African Scouts, who reckoned he had a way with animals, went ahead. He had volunteered to use his quietest but best dog-calling voice, to attract those of the kraal-hounds still left alive to one side of the fence, where he had high hopes of keeping them quiet. The others followed behind, lugging their weighty suitcases.

In moments the men were up and over the fence with practised agility but . . . it was too much for the dogs who commenced howling and barking frantically.

Cursing the dogs, our men dumped the cases against the outside of the house. There was a pregnant pause as some bent down to light the safety fuses.

Suddenly a window was thrown open and a stream of Sindebele and English invective, was directed at the dogs. Then the terrorist's words died and his jaw dropped as he saw the Scouts standing, frozen into immobility, just outside his window. He slammed it shut faster than he had opened it.

Everything seemed to happen at once . . . the Scouts scurried back to the fence and climbed it . . . some swear they almost took it in their stride . . . then dashed for the Land-Rovers. From the area of the house they heard a pandemonium of shouts.

The engines of the Land-Rovers were started up . . . a quick check . . . one of the European Scouts was missing. Can't wait . . . can only hope he'll make the crash rendezvous.

As they drove off, three satisfyingly loud grumbling explosions erupted behind them and they looked at each other and grinned. At the Botswana Police para-military post, they noted the first alarmed stirrings there . . . lights were going on and a few sleepy men were standing around peering about in sleepy disorientation, but they made no effort to interfere as the trucks sped past.

There was no sign of the missing soldier at the crash rendezvous . . . and after waiting as long as they could they reluctantly left, concluding he had either been captured or killed in the havoc of the blast, crossing back into Rhodesia at 04h45.

Then, at 10h45 to everyone's astonishment, the missing man arrived at the border

rendezvous, having walked home from Francistown in the best tradition of the Selous Scouts. After some congratulatory back-slapping, he told them how he had experienced almost unbelievable problems while attempting to light the fuse on his suitcase bomb. Suddenly he had realised he was cutting things too fine . . . the other bombs were due to blow . . . so he ran and took cover until they did . . . but by then he had left it too late to catch up with the rest of the team.

The ZIPRA house, according to all reports, was devastated. Special Branch sources indicated that five people had been injured by the blast and this was confirmed by press reports from Francistown.

It was unfortunately impossible to positively establish if the injured they spoke of, were ZIPRA residents. We personally felt certain they were, as the team had spotted no one else in the immediate vicinity.

There is little doubt that if the radio initiation system had remained functional, we would have demolished the house and killed everyone in it . . . notwithstanding, the alarm brought about by the barking dogs. Reports from ZIPRA survivors which filtered back, indicated they would have stayed under cover within the house, had their nostrils not picked up the distinctive smell of burning safety fuse which, being trained saboteurs, they immediately recognised and made a run for it. A few extra seconds of hesitation would have spelt their doom and our total success.

But, while we did not get the first prize, we certainly got the second, for the failure of one suitcase bomb to explode turned out to be beneficial. The Botswana authorities, having no evidence of Rhodesian involvement other than the clearly biased and uncorroborated testimony of ZIPRA, were able to match the surviving suitcase bomb as being identical to the description passed to them earlier by the Rhodesian authorities.

The question they had to decide, was whether the Rhodesians had attacked the house, or whether, as seemed more likely in the circumstances, the ZIPRA occupants had inadvertently touched off a short-delay fuse. We were never a party to their final conclusions . . . but they did put an immediate stop to the movement and storage of suitcase bombs within Botswana.

Eastern Districts: Internal Operations

The pace of infiltration by ZANLA into Rhodesia was increasing as 1976 drew to a close, at a rate the Rhodesian Security Forces could scarcely keep up with.

By June, in the Eastern Districts, ZANLA had infiltrated only two tribal trust lands in the area of Zimunya . . . but six months afterwards they had infiltrated and set themselves up in a total of twenty seven tribal trust lands and their influence had extended across the main Salisbury to Umtali road.

This picture, incidentally, certainly bore no relationship to the propaganda picture being fed to the Rhodesian public by the Rhodesian Government through the Rhodesian Information Department.

It is possible the Government thought it was good for the people to keep them in the dark, but the most likely truth is that they had fallen victim to their own optimistic propaganda and that they, in common with a lot of senior Security Force officers who closed their eyes to what their men were going through in the bush, obstinately refused to believe there was really a war on at all . . . and certainly not a war where if we didn't buck up our ideas, we were going to be the losers.

A group commanded by Major Boet Swart with Colour Sergeants James McGafferty, Noel Robie, Joe Bessler, and Hennie Steyn, together with Detective Inspector Keith Samler, to handle the Special Branch side of things, moved into the Lower-Buhera area.

In particular, they concentrated on the Chimutsa area in close vicinity to a high mountain feature called Romorehoto, overlooking the Sabi river, which was used as a landmark by incoming ZANLA terrorist groups.

To support the Selous Scout effort, a Rhodesian Light Infantry Fireforce was brought in and based at Buhera.

Keith Samler had a busy job in the first week, for little was known as to what was and was not happening, as it was virgin territory so far as anti-terrorist operations were concerned, and it meant a lot of in-depth research of back-reports at Special Branch Headquarters, external raid reports, records of known ZANLA sympathisers and information available at Buhera Police station, the District Commissioner's office and any other sources which could prove helpful in putting together briefing pictures for the teams.

It took little time to discover that a ZANLA terrorist entering the Buhera area had to carry a piece of black and white cloth with him to signify to the locals he was genuine. As well as this, he had to wear rubber bands on his arms and use various other identification gimmicks.

Things were pretty scrappy too from the terrorist side . . . the incoming groups had little training or experience . . . and were very lightly armed too. The callsigns working pseudo soon found . . . because the locals as well as the incoming terrorists had little idea of what was going on so far as the Scouts were concerned . . . that they were easily able to set up numerous ZANLA terrorists for the Fireforce kill.

After the first two contacts, the Rhodesian Light Infantry Fireforce were rubbing their hands with glee, having achieved the handsome tally of thirty three kills.

If the terrorists, the contactmen and the *mujibas* had been more experienced, the callsigns would have been in serious trouble for, in the initial stages, they were skating on very thin ice, getting a lot of on-the-job briefing, as it were, digging around the villages, picking up names and background information and sending it back to Keith Samler who would put it all together, research a name at Special Branch Headquarters or elsewhere and then feed back the sketchy extras obtained to the men in the field, who would carry on, their cover getting more believable all the time.

Reinforced by these means, the callsigns commenced writing letters to incoming or established terrorist groups . . . which was the best form of communication for the Selous Scouts as it involved no face-to-face confrontation.

The first important capture was Morgan Chiritsa, a Section Commander, who was shot through both legs during the course of a contact and captured.

After being treated by the medic, he was interrogated at point of capture out in the bush. In the circumstances, he was only too happy to co-operate and gave us the names, details and the places where the rest of his men could be found and where other groups working in the area could be located.

The classic Selous Scout offer was made to Morgan Chiritsa and he took it with alacrity . . . as was common with most captures.

It was decided to place him with Jim Bessler who had the callsign based nearest to Romorehoto.

Their lives could depend on being happy with him . . . did they trust him . . . did they feel safe with him . . . did they feel happy taking him with them?

'Yes, okay, let him come along, we'll see what we can do together.'

It was vital to deploy Morgan urgently, otherwise we would lose the chance of killing the terrorists he could set up for us, but of course, he couldn't walk . . . he'd been shot through both legs.

On examination it was discovered that, fortunately for him, no bullets were lodged in his body although he was nevertheless still fairly badly shot up . . . so the medic bandaged and splinted him up to make him comfortable and put him on a course of antibiotics to combat infection.

To give him the essential mobility needed, he was sat upon a bicycle and wheeled around the villages. The cover story was that he had been wounded in a contact and the group were trying to get him back to Mozambique.

Morgan was well-known as he was a senior ZANLA officer, so the cover story was good . . . it generated a lot of enthusiasm and numerous terrorists in the area expressed willingness to assist in getting him back to Mozambique.

Meetings were set up, but instead of them being met by Morgan and the pseudo terrorists, they

were met by the Rhodesian Light Infantry Fireforce who had a series of halcyon contacts.

Using Morgan, the killings of terrorists mounted rapidly, but finally, as was almost always inevitable . . . we became compromised.

This, it must be stressed, was no fault of Morgan Chiritsa who did a magnificent job for the Selous Scouts, because within twenty-four hours of being captured and changing sides, he was killing his own men . . . maybe not physically with a gun . . . but he certainly was in spirit.

Morgan was a friendly and likeable man and it was unfortunate for the Selous Scouts, that when, after compromise, he was taken to hospital and died unexpectedly four hours after admission, from a fat embolism . . . caused by a speck of bone marrow somehow finding its way into his bloodstream.

Boet Swart's group, now reinforced by brothers Piet van der Riet and Willie van der Riet and still in successful combination with Keith Samler, moved from Buhera for an operation in the Matema Tribal Trust Lands during December.

Mostly their work involved carrying out observations from hill features.

Within thirty six hours of deployment, Piet van der Riet reported having a terrorist group visual, and the Rhodesian Light Infantry Fireforce was called out to deal with them.

I believe it is true to say that the Rhodesian Light Infantry counted the subsequent contact as one of the toughest they ever handled. The ZANLA terrorists bottled themselves up and it took all of a long and grim day to winkle them out. During the course of the battle the Rhodesian Light Infantry lost two men killed in action.

The next day there was a follow-on contact with survivors of the same group, during which another soldier was killed.

In spite of these unhappy losses, the results from the terrorist side of things were far more serious, for amongst the dead were seven or eight senior ZANLA officers.

This was not known at that time, but it came to light four or five months later from a capture, who said the group were a complete Sectorial Command who had been on their way in from Mozambique to take over the ZANLA Musikavanhu Sector.

Major John Murphy

One quiet morning I was telephoned by an officer with a pronounced American twang. He introduced himself as Captain John Murphy of the Special Air Service and requested an interview with me. When John arrived for his interview, he had to stoop to enter my office. He was tall, had blond hair and penetrating blue eyes.

He came straight to the point. 'I would like to join the Selous Scouts, Sir.'

'Why?' I asked.

'Well, I've met some of your guys, Sir, and I've been impressed. I also know a little about your operations and it seems my type of scene, but to be totally honest, Sir . . . my present boss and I don't see eye to eye.' He shrugged. 'But I guess the boss is the boss, so if anyone has to go I guess it should be me.'

I took him on and gained my first experience of working with Americans. Until then, we had not allowed foreigners into the Regiment for reasons of security. But with the expansion of the war and the consequent expansion of the Regiment, we had to widen our field of recruiting, although we never lowered our extremely high standard of entrance and selection. John was formerly an officer in the United States Marines and a veteran of the Vietnam war, of which he seldom spoke. He had, from a Rhodesian point of view, a large number of medals, including a Bronze Star with Valour and Oak Leaves and a Purple Heart.

He was a son of whom America can justly be proud . . . an officer destined to play a large part in future external operations of the Selous Scouts.

I put him in command of the Territorial Army soldiers of the Selous Scouts, with whom he was an instant success.

Terms strange to the Rhodesian military ear such as: 'fire 'em up,' and: 'reconnaissance by fire,'

and: 'hit the weeds,' soon joined the Rhodesian soldiers' language, a language already rich in its own slang jargon.

Armpits with Eyeballs

When the Regiment was formed we were given our official title . . . Selous Scouts. As we got into swing the terrorists gave us another one . . . *Skuz'apo.* Then a nickname was hung on us . . . the unflattering title of being the *armpits with eyeballs.*

Certainly we had started a fashion in the Rhodesian Security Forces by growing beards, but it was for the commonsensical reason that they broke up the Caucasian features of operators. I expressly discouraged them from shaving . . . and . . . as they would obviously have stood out had they been the only hirsute men in the Regiment . . . I encouraged all non-operator Selous Scouts, both Territorial and regular, to grow their whiskers too.

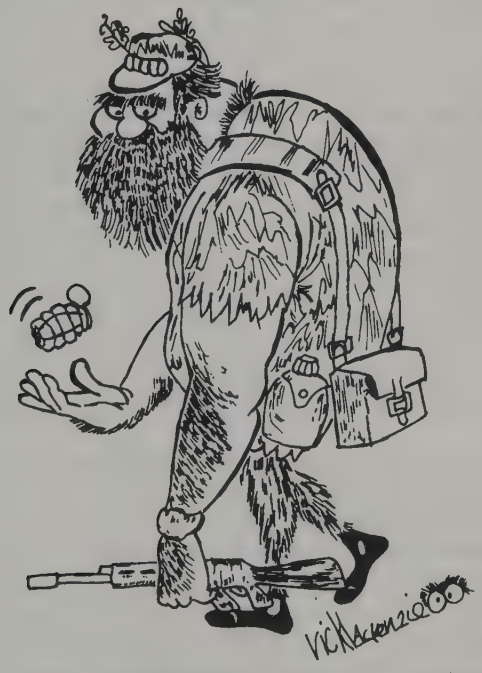
One day Captain Neil Kriel, a craggy man whose growth of full black beard rampaged over his features with the tenacity of jessie bush, was waiting for pick-up at a forward airfield, along with some of his operators.

At the scheduled time a fixed-wing aircraft landed and Neil and his men doubled forward and quickly emplaned.

The pilot, an officer noted for his quick and ready sense of humour, took one startled look at Neil and then shouted to make himself heard over the noise of the aircraft engines:

'My God, an armpit with eyeballs!'

And so the name stuck.



L8. A Selous Scout as seen by cartoonist Vic Mackenzie.

1976: The year ends

The introduction of the Reconnaissance Troop had given us a means to monitor terrorist movements inside their very camps with relative impunity. We had soon established a reputation that was second to none.

Schulie's ideas had strongly influenced our African soldiers' methods of soldiering and the European members of the Army, outside the Selous Scouts, had found it particularly difficult

getting used to the idea of African soldiers free-falling into operational areas . . . they did not know why or where either, which did not help to popularise the idea.

The enemy, in most cases, had been totally unaware their camps had been under close-in observation for, sometimes, as long as three weeks at a time. The presence of African soldiers in the teams had given us, for the first time the capability of actually infiltrating terrorist camps without being noticed and getting first-hand intelligence on them. The predominant success factor of the teams, was in my opinion, the blend of the best characteristics of both races.

Our small but incredibly efficient Reconnaissance Troop, which never at any time exceeded a strength of twelve, consisted of unique individuals in a unique body of individualists, and their achievements were the stuff of which folk tales are made.

Their philosophy towards their extremely hazardous duties was sometimes curious. Schulie for example, thought nothing of splitting from his team mate and other than an occasional brief radio contact, he would not see his partner for days . . . sometimes even weeks on end.

Yet, when the flying column concept was adopted for external raids by the Selous Scouts, Schulie looked on their actions, often from a close at hand observation point in enemy territory, with amazement and incredulity. He was quite convinced every column soldier, black or white, officer or warrant officer, non-commissioned officer or soldier, were really quite insane and dangerous to be with. He made it crystal clear he had no wish to go on a column. He didn't want to be a hero . . . he just wanted to do his own thing in his own solitary but *totally safe* way where his life would not unreasonably be endangered.

We had been forced, as the year progressed, to denude the internal scene to make up column numbers and the internal kill rate had suffered as a consequence. But, on balance, in spite of intense opposition . . . sometimes from the Special Branch Unit attached to us . . . the column results clearly showed my policy of trying to turn off the taps as being the only correct one.

During the year we had been responsible for the deaths of one thousand two hundred and fifty seven terrorists, of which only one hundred and eighty one had been killed internally by the action of our pseudo groups either directly, or indirectly by guiding Fireforces into successful action. Externally we had killed one thousand and seventy six terrorists, which, bearing in mind we had not been allowed air support, and our strength on any column had never exceeded seventy two men, was highly cost effective.

The total kills for the whole of the Rhodesian Security Forces for 1976, including our own internal claim of one hundred and eighty one, had not even reached a third of that.

I wrote a report to the Army Commander, General Walls, after the Nyadzonya/Pungwe raid.

'We are totally convinced,' I said, 'that to achieve any measure of real success our efforts must be judiciously applied to both the internal and external scenes. And, if anything, the external scene must have priority.

We firmly believe that as long as the enemy has the capability to reinforce and in turn receive large numbers of recruits at will, we are fighting a losing battle.

The enemy is now in a position to open new fronts as he chooses. He has sophisticated lines of communications, and above all secure bases from which to train, reorganise, resupply and launch offensives. At this moment the initiative is his and we are dancing to his tune.

His strategy is simple. At this time he has nearly a third of Rhodesia under command in terms of population. The remainder are either neutral or openly hostile. He has our main supply line in jeopardy and his activities in this direction have already had a marked effect on the movement of our imports and exports.

Very shortly we will reach a stage where we will simply have insufficient troops to cover the disaffected areas, which situation, at this very moment, certainly applies to our helicopter effort, as we have learned to our cost. When this stage is reached with our troop effort, they will move a portion of their base and command element into Rhodesia and we will be powerless to prevent it. Possibly at this late stage, we will then attempt to remedy the situation by operating externally, but it will be too late . . . it almost is already!

At this time, we can be certain a large percentage of our African Security Force personnel are watching this rapid encroachment with understandable anxiety . . . they know their fate if we go down. Mao Tse Tung said that the first troops to mutiny will always be native troops. It's easy to see why . . . it is the only way left for them to save their own skins.

It is mainly for these reasons we have rejected the Special Branch contention that we return to concern ourselves with the internal scene entirely. Besides, even if we did, it is highly unlikely that we would be able to indicate enough targets to compensate for the inflow.

I do not boast when I say, Sir, that in the Selous Scouts, you have in your hands the finest anti-terrorist force in the African continent. By the very nature of their make-up and composition they are in an unmatched position to create total havoc for unlimited periods in the hostile territories of Mozambique and Zambia.

The relatively small effort we have put into external strikes so far has had a marked effect which is completely out of proportion to the numbers of men we committed. This has been a particular truth in the ZANLA Nehanda Sector where a great number of terrorists were moved elsewhere.

The Nyadzonya/Pungwe column displayed the ease with which camps sited deep in enemy territory can, at the best, be totally taken out, or at the worst be completely disrupted.

The vulnerability of their road system has also been illustrated.

We have already clearly demonstrated our talents for these tasks, and if we are given our heads, we can soon show we have the capability of severely disrupting enemy rear echelons and their lines of communication. These types of action, carried out shoulder to shoulder with normal internal Scout operations backed by Fireforces, are the only way I see of rapidly turning the alarmingly high rising tide.'

Regrettably, my gloomy predictions, in due course of time, came to pass. While I do not suggest my ideas, if implemented earlier would, in the long term, have won the war, they certainly would have caused a huge disruption to the terrorist war machine in the short, medium and possibly even in the long term.

From a political point of view, it would have allowed an African moderate, like Bishop Muzorewa, time in which to construct a stable and peaceful foundation on which to build his moderate non-racial Government. The terrorists might then have found themselves on the losing end of the struggle to win the hearts and minds of the African rural population. It would probably even have reversed the gains the terrorists had already accrued by their intimidatory and bully-boy tactics. Then, by the time the British supervised election to choose a new African Government had swung into action, the results might have been totally different to what they were.

Always too Little – Always too Late
1977

Operation Manyatela: Reconnaissance and Attack on Madulo Pan: January, 1977

Special Branch intelligence supported by intercepts of the FRELIMO military radio net, gave clear indications of a large transit camp in the vicinity of Madulo Pan, some eighty kilometres south of the Rhodesian border, to the west of the Maputo/Malvernia railway line.

A photographic reconnaissance was run by a Canberra bomber and when the film shot was developed, clear evidence was revealed to confirm its existence.

To avoid detection, ZANLA transit camps had become little more than mere resting places, with stocks of ammunition, food and supplies concealed, often by burying, in wide areas of the surrounding bush. There were no huts or grass shelters and the camping areas were generally sited amongst thick bush or under large trees, to camouflage the terrorist presence from our reconnaissance aircraft. They were normally manned by a small garrison who lived, if they were fortunate, in nearby villages. Their job was to ration and re-supply the groups passing through on route to the war and to provide guides to take them to the next staging post.

It stood out clearly that transient terrorist groups rarely spent long in this or any of these camps, so we had to be ready to move fast and sure on receipt of information that it had come *alive* if positive strike results were to be achieved.

Special Branch suddenly came up with very positive and hot information, that the camp would be occupied by a large number of terrorists between the 10th and 12th of January.

We immediately got down to final planning, but we had little to go on. The air photographs showed only an aimless pattern of paths spread over a big area leading generally to a wide belt of thick trees and bush ... nothing else. We reluctantly concluded a conventional attack by ground forces would meet with little success, for the enemy would swiftly melt into the flat but thickly wooded terrain and evade the attentions of the attackers. Because of this it was decided to put in an air strike.

The Rhodesian Air Force, using shoe-string ingenuity, had produced a device, which, when attached to a flare, enabled an aircraft to ignite it by a radio impulse. This gave them the much needed capability of accurately bombing targets at night. After much trial and error a system of using two flares had been devised, whereby the Canberra jet bombers could hit targets with pin-point accuracy.

The first flare would be positioned a maximum of eight hundred metres from the target. The other had to be placed about two to four kilometres further out from the first flare, which gave them the advantage of not alerting the enemy too early by the ignition and allowing the bombers those few but vital extra seconds to correct their line of approach, if they were not bang on.

The drill was simple, the navigator having been told the precise distance the flares were from the target, would offset his bombsight accordingly. On approach to the target he would initiate both flares, then, while keeping his eyes glued firmly to the bombsight, he would pass any course corrections to the pilot and release his bombs on the forward flare. If this had been correctly positioned and the distance from target calculated accurately, the bombs would straddle the target.

In theory, at least, it worked, and certainly the trials carried out at Inkomo were superbly successful.

There was one big problem ... someone had to go in on the ground and put them there before they could be activated.

The Air Force had perfected a bomb known as the *Alpha* bomb. It was cylindrical in shape and dozens were dropped at one time. It was designed to bounce and explode just above ground level, so it had an awesome killing capability as an anti-personnel bomb.

Three Canberra jet bombers could carpet an area a kilometre square with casual ease, and there would be little likelihood, afterwards, of anyone walking out of there unscathed.

Like most innovations designed for specific purposes, the technique had limitations and in this case it was high ground, for the bombers had to come in at three hundred feet for their bombing runs to be effective.

I discussed the situation with Captain Rob Warracker and it became evident to us both that the reconnaissance team members tasked with setting the flares, would have their work cut out correctly estimating distances while positioning them, as the area was flat and featureless.

Rob had, by this time, developed a close working relationship with the Rhodesian Air Force Photographic Interpretation Section, and at his request, they produced an enormous blown-up photograph of the transit camp area. An unusually large tree, some four hundred metres from the camp, was selected as the site for the first flare and a large and very distinctive clump of trees, about two kilometres further away from the camp, on the required compass bearing, was chosen as the position for the second flare.

A very comprehensive joint briefing took place with the Air Force and all necessary details for the mounting of the attack were worked out. The attack was scheduled for 04h00 on the morning of the 12th of January. This time was chosen because it was customary for ZANLA terrorists to get out of their blankets and prepare for the forthcoming day's activities then. Sometimes they might even move out of camp as a precaution against dawn attacks by the Rhodesians. Whatever they might have in mind to do though, it was almost certain the majority would be standing upright when the bombs fell, which should ensure the maximum slaughter.

I arranged for Captain Richard Pomford to take in a heliborne force of sixteen men just after first light to sweep the camp area for wounded terrorists, and to gather up any weapons or documents which might be useful to us.

Com-Ops allowed us a small, but heavily armed, fixed-wing aircraft in support in which Major Bert Sachse would overfly the area and control the operation.

Two Hawker Hunter jet fighters were also made available to lend support should Richard Pomford and his men find themselves in trouble.

Our assessment nevertheless, based on frustrating experience, was that by the time Richard arrived, all the unwounded terrorists would have dispersed into the bush.

Captain Schollenberg and Sergeant Mpoto jumped from a Dakota at seventeen thousand feet at 16h33 on Monday the 10th of January and, following their supply box down, landed safely twelve kilometres to the west of the target.

After landing, they established a lying up place where they remained for twenty four hours, checking the serviceability of their equipment, particularly the flares, and making any final last minute arrangements and adjustments.

At 16h00 on Tuesday the 11th of January, they started moving through the bush towards their target, reaching it after dark.

They first conducted a close-in reconnaissance of the camp and confirmed it was full of ZANLA terrorists. Sergeant Mpoto, to make sure, crawled in next to the camp fires and listened to the small talk of the unsuspecting terrorists.

Satisfied, the reconnaissance team immediately set about locating the pre-selected points to set up the flares, but found this was easier said than done. Pin-pointing them on a blown-up air photograph was one thing . . . on the ground by the light of a very uncertain moon, while trying to avoid terrorist outposts and sentries, was quite another.

Schulie began to think he might have to ask the Air Force to postpone the attack and mount it the next night, but this would have meant their certain discovery by terrorist patrols when daylight came, which apart from placing them in extreme danger, would likely mean an

immediate terrorist exodus from the camp and the loss of the chance to attack them.

Then, just as he was about to ask for a one day postponement, they located the unusually large tree. Working swiftly they set up the first flare, and walked on a backbearing for two kilometres until they found the other flarepoint . . . the clump of trees.

By 02h15 on the 12th of January, they had set up their radio and settled down to make contact with the incoming flight of bombers when they came within range.

Towards H-hour a reserve Canberra bomber, but still with its bomb bays full, arrived in the vicinity and circled at extremely high altitude. Lying in the nose-cone, wearing many layers of warm clothing to keep out the icy cold, was Rob Warracker, who soon established communications with Schulie and confirmed it was all systems go and relayed this on to the Canberras doing the bombing.

A few minutes out from target, the pilot leading the strike-force called for light, so Schulie initiated the furthermost flare manually and gave the pilots a final inflight briefing.

The pilot of the lead aircraft initiated the second flare by radio, then, moving swiftly ahead of their sound at three hundred feet above the ground, the sleek bombers swept past Schulie and Mpoto and released their bombs.

The bombers were right on target and the reconnaissance team lay wrapped by the darkness, listening with satisfaction to the screams and panic-stricken shouts which erupted from the camp area.

Collecting the remains of the close-in flare, so as not to disclose they'd been around, the Scouts left the area and walked to their pick-up point.

At first light Captain Richard Pomford and his men arrived over the target area in their helicopters, while Major Bert Sachse flew overhead in a small fixed-wing aircraft. To their astonishment, his force was met by a veritable hail of gunfire and he at first concluded the bombers had missed the target.

The two supporting Hunter jets, loitering nearby on call, screamed angrily in with their rockets and cannons, but the return fire didn't diminish.

Looking down, Bert Sachse suddenly realised what had happened. A heavily armed FRELIMO column had arrived to aid the terrorists. It was they who were firing. Any ground action would inevitably involve FRELIMO, and Richard's force was too light to tackle this, so Bert very wisely cancelled.

Meanwhile, the Hunters had asked Rob Warracker's Canberra, which had already crossed the border on its way home, to return and bomb the FRELIMO column.

The weather was cloudy and the pilot made a slow turn, so he could orientate himself with the ground losing altitude as he did so, but unfortunately, he came out of the clouds directly over Malvernia.

Malvernia, warned by Mapai of the Madulo Pan attack, had a general alert on. Within moments heavy flak as well as small arms fire, was being flung up at the aircraft.

No one on the Rhodesian side of the border saw what hit the Canberra but it suddenly banked steeply, then tipped over and dived straight into the ground, exploding and sending up a black pall of smoke.

Everyone aboard must have been killed instantly.

And so perished Rob Warracker, exactly twenty nine days after he had been presented with the Silver Cross of Rhodesia for outstanding gallantry. His death was a great blow to all of us, for he was not only a fine soldier with a keen analytical brain, but he was a great character as well. Above all and more important to his memory as a Selous Scout, he had a natural flair for Special Force soldiering and understood clearly the tremendous asset they were in time of war, if used with imagination, boldness and foresight. Along with Rob, died the Canberra's crew – the pilot, Flight Lieutenant Ian Donaldson, and the navigator, Air Sub Lieutenant David Hawkes.

Radio intercepts said the number of ZANLA killed at Madulo Pan was six with another seventy wounded. But documents captured later increased the tally to ten killed and one

hundred and two wounded. Most of the wounded, we learned, had lost limbs which, so far as we were concerned, was better than kills, for wounded men gave the enemy the additional problems of long-term care in back areas and clogged up their administration. The sight of legless comrades also did little to raise the martial ardour of new terrorist recruits.

Andre Rabie Barracks

With the permission of the Army Commander, the Inkomo Barracks was named after the late Sergeant Andre Rabie, who had died before the Regiment was formed.

It was an honour to his memory that was well deserved.

Internal Operations: Mtoko

The early months of the year were good for kills by callsigns working internally. They were not normally good, as the tree canopy is thick and the undergrowth dense due to the gathering intensity of the rainy season, making it hard for Fireforces to make contact.

Each contact had its own background story of Selous Scouts living lies out in the bush, moving into tribal villages by night and never knowing from one day to the next, whether they were *really* deceiving the enemy, or whether they were themselves being deceived and set up for a bloody kill by the local sympathisers.

Behind these groups, sharing their anxiety like a permanent worrying shadow, would be the small headquarter groups consisting of the European commissioned officer, warrant officer or non-commissioned officer commanding, and his men . . . listening . . . forever scheming.

There are hundreds of stories of these men which were lost or dissipated by the winds of change, which finally swept Rhodesia, probably many now will never be told.

Take Corporal Obasi, tall and thin with Arabic features . . . a man with nerves of steel. He and his Troop Sergeant, Panebondo, moved out on a two man reconnaissance to speak to the local people.

As always, they could not directly question the locals on where the terrorists could be found, for that would immediately have stamped them with the brand of the imposter . . . the *Skuz'apo.* Instead, they perpetually engaged in long winded conversations, regarding the weather, the state of the crops and all those other snippety subjects so important to people living close to nature, with only the occasional oblique reference to their wish to meet other terrorists in the area.

Then, as they had hoped, someone let something slip. Armed then with this ZANLA titbit, Obasi and Panebondo made their way into the area indicated by the locals and by dint of perseverance and extreme patience, located a camp containing fifteen terrorists and called for a Fireforce.

Carrying a radio always presented a major problem as the locals were well aware that the Selous Scouts used them to call in Fireforces, so they were always on the look-out for them. Great ingenuity was used to conceal them to satisfy the preferences of the operators and in some instances we even built them into ordinary transistor radios, which the terrorists invariably carried to keep themselves abreast with the Rhodesian Broadcasting Corporation's news broadcasts, as well as those emanating from Zambia and Mozambique. Obasi's preference was to carry his almost openly in a brown paper bag and no one ever tumbled to it.

An efficient Selous Scout could make life easy for a Fireforce commander, as he often was able to provide him with not only a detailed description of the terrain, but could even suggest the best plan of attack. It stood to reason that it was sensible to listen to someone who could actually see likely enemy escape routes and who was in the best position to select parachute dropping zones and indicate where the helicopters should run in.

The few Fireforce commanders who habitually ignored the advice of our highly experienced operators on the ground, seldom achieved the high kill rates of those who did.

Sergeant Panebondo made radio contact with the incoming Fireforce of the Rhodesian Light Infantry and, with the loving care of a father looking after his sons, guided them in onto target.

The arrival overhead of the K-car helicopter gunship, the three G-car helicopters and a paratroop Dakota, hit the enemy with shocking surprise, and within an hour ten terrorists had been killed, the remaining five escaping into the bush.

Afterwards, Sergeant Panebondo and Lance Corporal Obasi, remained behind to try to locate the five survivors. They put it out around the villages that they had only just escaped the contact with their lives and wanted to rejoin any other survivors there might be.

This story paid off when a local brought them a letter from a genuine survivor . . . the political commissar . . . who was delighted to hear that others had lived. Naturally, the then ZANLA system of security did not allow him to ask for their real or assumed *Chimurenga* names.

A meeting was arranged with both parties exercising great care, but when it came about, the political commissar and another terrorist were taken prisoner.

A few days later, Lance Corporal Obasi was in some tribal trust land to the east of Mtoko with a patrol when they saw terrorist tracks, leaving his men concealed on high ground he went forward himself to investigate, following the suspect tracks through thick bush until he came upon a terrorist encampment next to a village containing thirty ZANLA terrorists . . . who were just as startled at seeing him as he was at seeing them.

Fortunately, it was an inexperienced group coming into the country, mostly new recruits, and they were relieved in their newness to see Obasi, as they were lost and wanted to re-establish their bearings.

Obasi, as always, was happily obliging, but after a while insisted on leaving so he could fetch the rest of his men to meet the newcomers. The terrorists, in their naivete, raised no objections and let him go.

Then, about a hundred metres away from the camp, a *mujiba* who had been accompanying the terrorists, ran after and caught him up.

'The Commander wants you to return . . . he has some more questions to ask before he will allow you to bring your men here.'

It was clear to Lance Corporal Obasi that the inexperienced commander had suddenly recalled the security procedures, which had been drummed into him before he had departed from Mozambique.

'I think you are a traitor and part of that *Skuz'apo* group . . . I'll ask you questions instead,' said Obasi cleverly turning the tables.

Protesting his innocence, the shocked tribesman was led away at gunpoint to join the pseudo group of Lance Corporal Obasi, waiting for him in the hills.

Now, thoroughly alarmed that perhaps he had been fooled by a group of bogus terrorists . . . the hated Selous Scouts . . . the *mujiba* did everything he could to show he was truly loyal to the cause. He readily, even eagerly answered every question put to him until Obasi had a complete knowledge of the layout of the terrorist encampment, the different types and quantities of weapons carried by the terrorists and the total number of men present.

Without further delay, Lance Corporal Obasi moved away and relayed the story by the VHF radio in his brown paper bag back to the troop commander, whose command complex was in a kopje ten kilometres away. The troop commander called the Selous Scouts' operations controller at Mtoko who passed it on to Fireforce.

The *mujiba*, thoroughly soaked of information relating to the ZANLA transit group, was ordered to return to them to pass on the message that Obasi and his men, numbering eight, would be joining them shortly for a meeting.

The terrorist commander, his suspicions by now thoroughly aroused, put his men into an ambush position and settled down to await their return.

The siren wailed at the Fireforce base at Mtoko and the men of 1-Commando, 1-Rhodesian Light Infantry, grabbed their firearms and equipment and moved swiftly to their aircraft.

The stick commanders gathered for their briefing. The call-out was for a sighting of thirty terrorists.

A drop of twenty paratroopers in five sticks of four men, would be made on a drop-zone two kilometres north of the suspect village.

Cyclone-7 . . . three G-car helicopters . . . would bring in their stop forces, each of four men, and position two on a subsidiary river running north-west to south-east, feeding a larger river running west to east, and one on a hill range just south of the major river to act as an observation point/stop force.

The K-car helicopter gunship would be commanded by 1-Commando's second in command, Captain Molner.

The tough and seasoned men of the Rhodesian Light Infantry filed into the Dakota, while the pilot, Vic Culpin, started the engines.

First in door was callsign Stop-4, commanded by Sergeant (later Lieutenant) Billy Wiggill. His stick comprised Lance Corporal *HB* Huston-Brown – troop medic and second in command, Trooper Andy Mutch – machinegun, and Trooper *Jumbo* Smythe – rifle grenades.

Lance Corporal Obasi established direct radio communication with the rapidly approaching Fireforce, and without asking permission commenced giving the Rhodeisan Light Infantry Fireforce commander, Captain Molner, an in-flight briefing.

There was a crackle of static barely concealing the irritation of this officer, who clearly objected to a lance corporal virtually taking command and instructing him as to where he should position his stop forces.

He icily enquired from Obasi, how it was he could be so certain of his facts.

'I have just left the terrorist camp . . . I should be certain,' snapped Lance Corporal Obasi heatedly.

The testiness of the Rhodesian Light Infantry officer changed to a note of astonished respect and he raised no further objections to following the instructions of a lance corporal.

The dropping zone looked fairly tight and rocky, and Billy Wiggill from his doorway position had a good view of the area.

Would they see action or would it be another lemon?

The K-car pulled up over the *eskimo* position . . . Selous Scouts were *eskimos* in Rhodesian Light Infantry jargon, because they operated in *frozen* areas . . . and was given a final talk-in by Lance Corporal Obasi.

The gunship swung away and Billy Wiggill felt his excitement rise as the K-car opened fire with its twenty millimetre cannon . . . he could see the bursts clearly from his position at the door of the Dakota. This was no lemon.

The green light flashed on.

'Go!'

The paratroopers tumbled through the doorway of the Dakota.

The weather was perfect for the jump . . . a few bumps and scratches reported after landing but no casualties.

After regrouping, the sweep line moved west and south behind Lance Corporal Obasi's observation point, finally swinging east.

The K-car suddenly opened fire to the front of Billy Wiggill and his stick, now on the right flank of the sweep line.

Soon they overran the position a terrorist was occupying, but he was oblivious to the body search he was subjected to, because he had taken a DH . . . a direct hit . . . from a cannon shell.

Billy's men picked up his AK-47, his ammunition pouches, pyrotechnics and a bundle of propaganda . . . he wouldn't need any of that again.

The sweep line closed towards the village without incident . . . all the troops very conscious that the K-car was still firing to the east and south of them.

The radio crackled into life as Corporal Obasi, from his hill position, reported that no terrorists were visible . . . they had gone to ground.

HB saw movement in a scrub-patch fifty metres to the sweep line's front. The seasoned soldiers immediately opened fire, before the blue denim clad ZANLA terrorists got off a shot,

and killed all four . . . two SKS assault rifles and two AK-47's were recovered from the contact area.

As the sweep continued towards the village . . . Trooper *Kotz* Kotze was ordered off his observation point to the south of the river to check out movement on its bank.

On his approach, nine terrorist recruits, unarmed but all carrying packs and wearing the blue denim uniform common to all the gang, left their cover and surrendered . . . begging him not to shoot them.

The Rhodesian Light Infantry were closing in fast on the village . . . Billy Wiggill's section was channelled to move through a gap between a high rubber hedge surrounding the village and a dip-tank.

Almost immediately a terrorist appeared, running across the front of the sweep-line, firing towards Billy's callsign.

Behind the terrorist, in hot pursuit, ran Corporal Gary (Disco) O'Driscoll, (later to be killed in action), who, come what may, was determined to capture him, but who, by his bold actions, made it difficult to return the enemy fire.

Still firing, the terrorist ducked into cover about ten metres in front of Stop-4.

'You bastards!' *Jumbo* Smythe suddenly exclaimed and crumpled to his knees, his blood spreading crimson over the waistband of his shorts.

'Medic!' Billy shouted.

HB crawled over to aid *Jumbo,* even though the section was pinned down in the open.

The terrorist increased his rate of fire and this gave Disco the opportunity he had been waiting for, and he leapt from cover and jumped onto the terrorists's back, knocking him out with his rifle butt.

By this time the rest of the sweep force were having fleeting contacts all over the area.

A G-car came down to uplift *Jumbo* Smythe, and the terrorist prisoner, when he saw the helicopter dropping, tried to break and make a run for it . . . his reward was a burst of gunfire, which wounded him in both legs.

Billy and his reduced callsign carried on into the centre of the village, encountering some stubborn resistance from a terrorist whose fire position was under a grain bin.

He called for white phosphorus, then by moving slightly to the flank, he and Andy Mutch expeditiously despatched him with their combined fire.

The remainder of the sweep force were, meanwhile, busily engaged in killing two other terrorists who had been hiding in one of the village huts.

Their deaths signalled the end of the action, for after this, no further terrorists were found.

The final tally was nine ZANLA terrorists killed, one wounded and captured, and a further nine terrorist recruit trainees captured.

And so, the Rhodesian Light Infantry Fireforce re-emplaned and returned to their Mtoko base . . . a good job, as was usual, very well done.

And Corporal Obasi and his men?

Well, also as usual, there were survivors from the contact to be found . . . new groups were coming in . . . it was just another day in the life of a Selous Scout.

Enter the Press: March, 1977

Most soldiers avoid the news media as if it were the plague, though in truth, the average soldier during the course of his career, gets few opportunities of exposure to the press except perhaps where he is awarded a medal or something of that nature. Even then, the Army Public Relations Officer would always be hovering close by and be responsible for arranging the interview and before it took place, would brief the soldier on sensitive areas . . . there are always sensitive areas in a soldier's world . . . and would then, like an anxious hen, keep a watching brief on his and the Army's interests.

In all of the twenty five years army service I had completed until then, I had made the

newspapers twice . . . once when receiving a medal and once while holding the Colours of the Rhodesian Light Infantry which were about to be presented.

Because of our role in the Selous Scouts and the tight security that of necessity surrounded the Regiment, and the fact that our African soldiers' lives depended upon their anonymity, we went to extreme lengths and took great pains to keep a low profile.

This state of affairs, not only applied to the public and the world at large, but also to our own army and we were the only unit virtually free from administration, inspections and such other hard-dying peacetime habits so beloved by the military mind.

When off duty, civilian clothing was the order of the day and none of our African operators were allowed to be seen riding in military vehicles, in the event they were recognised as Selous Scouts or even as soldiers.

Two fifty-seater buses which we had captured from FRELIMO were resprayed a nondescript colour and used to transport our African soldiers and their families to town for shopping trips and such like. Gradually, in fact, we had begun to build up a large fleet of civilian vehicles, gained mainly through the courtesy of FRELIMO, but ZIPRA and ZANLA also made useful contributions to the Selous Scout war effort. Then, as the war intensified, the situation was reached where there were so few civilian vehicles about in the operational areas, only military vehicles attracted little attention. So, to merge into the general background, we reluctantly abandoned the comfort of our civilian transport and took to using military vehicles again, although the canvas canopies were kept well tied down so that faces couldn't be seen.

Wars, by their nature are ugly, but in terrorist wars that uglyness is even more multi-faced. Terrorist tactics of using barbarous terror as a means of subjugating a population have been used throughout South America to Asia to Europe to Africa . . . and . . . Rhodesia was certainly not excepted . . . if anything it was probably worse there than in a lot of terrorist insurgencies elsewhere.

Terror was applied widely as a method of sapping the morale and will of the white population, and many women and children were brutally butchered in the most revolting circumstances by the terrorist factions to achieve this.

A principle for the successful waging of a terrorist war in modern times, is to attract world attention and bring opinion firmly and favourably down onto the insurgents' side. The adage of Dr. Goebels devised in the days of Nazi Germany . . . that the bigger the lie, the more easily it is believed . . . has been refined and reshaped with considerable sophistication. Sometimes though, the use of terror can be a double edged sword for occasionally, and I stress occasionally, it alienates the very opinion, the press opinion, which the terrorists so desperately strive to attract.

Our immensely successful many-fronted campaigns had not escaped the notice of the ZIPRA and ZANLA terrorists, nor their communist mentors, for we had introduced an insurgency factor into their own midsts which they had no effective means of combating.

In spite of, or perhaps because of the secrecy surrounding us, a certain mystique had grown up about the Scouts. The general public, fed on a diet of sometimes wildly improbable rumours relating to our real and supposed exploits, built a myth about us until we were thought of as akin to supermen.

Speculation grew and further credence was added to the myths when terse and uninformative announcements were made in Security Force communiques, and a steady flow of gallantry medals began to be awarded to Selous Scouts.

Atrocities by terrorists had become the norm in everyday life within the tribal trust lands, and the high tally of daily murders committed by ZANLA and ZIPRA were barely given press mention, unless the incidents were particularly horrible or different, like as happened often, wives being forced to eat flesh cut from their murdered husband's bodies or whole villages being raized to the ground and all the villagers slaughtered . . . perhaps being burnt to death while locked in their huts in terrorist created holocausts.

Then on the 5th December, 1976, a ZIPRA terrorist, Albert Ncube, pursuing ZIPRA

strategy, held up a car near Lupane in Matabeleland and ordered the three white missionary passengers – Catholic Bishop Adolph Schmitt, Father Possenti Weggarten and Sister Maria Frances out into the road where he shot them to death in cold blood. Nkomo's men amongst a horrifyingly large catalogue of atrocities, had already, in the August previous, burst into the defenceless St. Paul's Mission at Lupane and ordered fifty nine year old Dr. Johanna Decker out of the dispensary, where she was treating African patients, and fifty four year old Catholic Sister Ferdinand Ploner out of the maternity wards where several women were in labour, and after beating them up, off handedly killed them.

The international press corps, this time flanked by unusual allies in the form of the clergy, began to emit long-overdue angry noises. Some made easily-drawn parallels with the wholesale slaughter of non-combatant doctors, nurses and missionaries by Japan's Emperor Hirohito's lieutenants and men, on their entry into Hong Kong and Singapore during World War-2, with the bestial behaviour of Joshua Nkomo's lieutenants and men out in the Rhodesian bush.

The angry noises grew to an uproar when, as if to top this, five white nuns and five white priests were slaughtered without mercy at Musami Catholic Mission in Mashonaland by Robert Mugabe's ZANLA terrorists.

The terrorists, on the advice of their Russian and Red Chinese mentors, hastily put it out that it was not their work . . . it was the work of the Selous Scouts. They obviously hoped to kill two birds with one stone, by discrediting us and refocusing the not inconsiderable heat which was being directed at themselves.

The Geneva conference was in full swing at the time and the terrorist leaders attending, had a ready forum in which to blandly put out their outrageous lies. They received much support, as might be expected, from the usual socialist politicians and by organizations such as the World Council of Churches, a communist front organization, and all the other bleeding hearts who could not and would not believe any evil of *freedom fighting* black Africans or, conversely, that any good at all could come from people . . . if they happened to be white-skinned Africans!

Needless to say, none bothered to take any note whatsoever of the reports by that very fine Police force, the British South Africa Police of Rhodesia, on their investigations which conclusively proved the atrocities were of terrorist perpetration.

Unfortunately, neither the Rhodesian Government nor any of its agencies were particularly good at public relations . . . in fact, let's be factual, they were abysmally bad. They tended rather to stoically ignore what the press or the media said. To compound this folly, they often tried to pretend the press didn't exist at all. This quite naturally, meant that very one sided viewpoints, the viewpoints not at all favourable to Rhodesia, gained most press attention.

Although the Govermment, through its agencies, protested often, they rarely did anything to combat scurrilous allegations by timeously producing evidence to prove they were untrue.

We were soldiers, we could do nothing about it. The European members of the Selous Scouts simply shrugged their shoulders and ignored the stories . . . not so the African Selous Scouts. The African Regimental Sergeant Major came to see me and expressed their collective feelings.

'Ishe,' he said, 'if something is not done, a lot of our men will apply for transfers to other units.'

I sought interview with General Walls and we discussed the whole situation.

'Why don't we open your barracks to the press?' he asked.

To put it mildly, I was horrified. His suggestion went totally against my grain, after being used to such a tight security blanket for so long.

'Think about it, Ron, it could be the answer to bring those ugly stories to an abrupt halt. Don't you think that perhaps we owe it to your African members?'

I returned to Andre Rabié Barracks and pondered long and hard over the General's suggestion and finally concluded he was right. In any case, like it or not and I didn't, there was clearly no alternative.

I telephoned and told him that, after mature reflection, I had to reluctantly agree with what

he had said. I didn't like it, but there it was. Having made the decision, I left Inkomo and went off on a tour of the Selous Scout forts throughout the country.

I was at Mtoko, when a signal came through from Army Headquarters advising me a deputation from the press would arrive at Inkomo during the afternoon of the 4th of March and would remain as my guests for four days.

I immediately returned to Inkomo and ordered certain sensible precautionary measures to be put into action. I deemed it imperative, above all, that the press not learn that we were in reality a pseudo-terrorist unit, for that would play right into the hands of our detractors and our first duty was still to wage war and we could not do that successfully with an eyeglass focussed on our every movement thereafter. It was Britain's great wartime leader, Winston Churchill, who said, when discussing secret strategies, that: 'In war the truth is sometimes so precious it must be protected with a bodyguard of lies.'

I called an immediate meeting of all personnel in camp and explained the situation to the lads. They were aghast . . . as aghast as I had no doubt looked when General Walls had first put the suggestion to me . . . when I explained what was about to happen. The whole barracks were going to be thrown wide open . . . all terrorist gear and all captured civilian vehicles, had to be concealed before the press arrived.

Luckily, we had some eight thousand acres of bush at Inkomo, so we did not face too many problems when looking for hiding places.

A phony operations room was established in a temporary shack and stickers denoting phantom callsigns adorned the walls and the whole facade was completed by the installation of a fake radio net, which operated only to another shack in a quiet part of camp.

I paid particular attention to the African Selous Scouts.

'You men will be prime targets for questions.'

I ordered my African Regimental Sergeant Major to select sixteen of the wiliest African Selous Scouts who, for the duration of the press visit, were nominated to be the only African soldiers able to converse in English. If any of the others were questioned, they were ordered to play dumb and answer only in Shona.

Above all, it was emphasized, everyone black or white, was to talk only of tracking . . . nothing else but tracking.

I planned for our visitors to spend an afternoon and one night at the Andre Rabie Barracks . . . then afterwards, we would fly them up to Kariba where a Selous Scout selection course was actually in progress. Once there, they would spend three days at *Wafa wafa wasara wasara* where there would be plenty to interest them, but little which could cause us embarrassment.

The big day finally arrived, and at 14h30 I drove with some trepidation to the Territorial soldiers' mess, the venue for my introductory talk. As I parked I noticed, with mounting concern, that there seemed to be an extraordinary large number of cars, and even a few buses, parked outside the club.

A colonel from the Joint Planning Staff, met me at the door.

'I sincerely hope you're on the ball, Ron . . . and, for Christ's sake, be careful what you say.'

We went in together and I got the shock of my life. Ranged around the lectern was a seeming forest of microphones. The room seemed to be packed with an incredible number of ladies and gentlemen of the press. To complete my dismay, a formidable battery of television cameras focused on me like the artillery at El Alamein.

Gone were my confident expectations of a cosy handful of the local press corps . . . a few familiar faces from perhaps the Rhodesia Herald, the Bulawayo Chronicle and maybe one or two from newspapers in South Africa.

I was flabbergasted . . . unthinkingly I breathed a soldier's expletive.

The effect was electric. Everyone seemed to bend and fiddle frantically with the switches on their equipment.

'Say, Major,' drawled an American, 'twenty million people view the programme I present . . . do you mind moderating your language?'

I apologized humbly, then started my opening address. When I had concluded, I invited questions.

There were many . . . in fact, I felt as if I were about to be overwhelmed.

'Do you dress up and act like terrorists?' was the first.

'Now why on earth would we want to do that? By the time you have finished here, you will have seen everything of the finest bush soldiers in the Rhodesian Army . . . perhaps in the world . . . and you will have realised without question, that with our skills and bush expertise we have no reason to dress up as terrorists.'

A barrage of questions hotly assailed me and I answered most of them to the best of my ability. Finally, I held up my hand.

'Ladies and gentlemen, we will be together for four days. You will have plenty of time for questions, but I imagine many will answer themselves as your visit progresses.'

I terminated the lecture and took them off on a tour of the camp, but prior to leaving the building I gave them a warning . . . no pictures of any of the African soldiers and . . . no questions on the subject of politics.

'Soldiers,' I emphasized, 'are not political animals.'

Having toured the camp, I ended up at my bogus operations room. The signallers across the camp entered into the spirit of things and were popping out calls for Fireforces like they were going out of fashion.

'Callsign two-two . . . Lieutenant Bloggs and three men . . . reporting we are about to attack a section of twenty two ZANLA terrorists we have been tracking since they crossed from Mozambique . . .'

'After three days on the tracks we now have the enemy visual . . .'

This went on almost continuously and our newly-made friends of the press listened with mesmerized fascination.

Then came one particular gem from a bogus callsign which I remember well.

'Reporting we are on tracks which are three minutes old . . .'

I shuddered, realising immediately it was overdue to call a halt. If there was much more ham acting like that, our cover would be shot to pieces. I shepherded my thoroughly impressed guests outside, and invited them to come across to the mess and finish the day with a drink.

The mess, still a tin shack at that time, was the genuine multiracial mess for all members of the rank of sergeant and above, but I sensed that many of the pressmen and women thought the whole set-up had been pre-arranged to parade the fact we were a multiracial unit.

After a while, I moved the whole gaggle across to the huge rondavel we had built as the Troopers' Mess where, elbow to elbow and well lubricated by alcohol by then, were the black and white soldiers of the Selous Scouts.

The Africans started to sing in close harmony, as only Africans can, and there was a mad scramble for tape recorders. The press were mightily impressed by this stage and I, almost literally, had to drag them away.

I watched with a quiet smile the quaint antics, the incredible sign language and gesticulations used by some of the reporters when trying to strike up conversations with my African soldiers.

I was impressed and was sure that, in normal circumstances, their efforts would have elicited answers from Eskimos to Red Indians, but on this occasion alas, my soldiers obeyed orders and responded only in monosyllabic Shona.

It was, I'm afraid, a waste of some excellent educations . . . for most of my soldiers were bilingually fluent in both English and Shona.

The following day we went to Kariba by Dakota aircraft, so they could watch the selection course in progress plus experience the tracking and bush-craft courses at first hand.

There was no longer any need for pretence, for this was the genuine thing. They were to witness at first hand the strenuous hardships that our volunteers were subjected to and see the type of men we finished up with at the end of the course.

They were unanimously impressed with the tracking and bush-craft expertise displayed for

them, and many of them actually tried some culinary delights of the Selous Scouts ... well-rotted baboon and maggoty meat ... so they could write at first hand what it was all about.

This, as one might say in army parlance, was good kit. I knew that stories such as this would take their minds off most other things.

While the press were looking at us, I in my turn, had a close look at them and was pleasantly surprised. I enjoyed their stay with us and my initial misgivings fell away as rapport developed to replace the previous clouds of mutual distrust.

They were intelligent, obviously enquiring and very interesting to talk to ... nice people too.

I was also pleasantly surprised we had been able to maintain our cover, which, astonishingly, seemed more intact than it was before. The only near problem, was an American who walked about continually as if smelling a rat ... and ... who very nearly found that ever present rodent.

We gained enormous dividends from this visit as a public relations exercise and reports of the Selous Scouts being responsible for atrocities almost fell away completely. Again, also on the credit side, the coverage although embarrassing for us, did the Rhodesian and our own image a great deal of good in countries overseas.

The only place it didn't do the Selous Scouts any good was within the ranks of the Rhodesian Army ... where some pretty bitter feelings were aroused. This was as ridiculous as it was unpleasant from a human relationship point of view. It had not been of our choosing that we should become in any way a sort of glamour unit. Yet, we couldn't explain the reasons for the exercise to any of our comrades in other units either, for this would have immediately negated the benefits reaped.

It reminded me, perhaps, of an Arab proverb which goes something like this:

He who sings most sweetly ... attracts most envy,
He who attracts most envy ... attracts most enemies,
He who attracts most enemies ... sings most sadly.

The Selous Scouts, of course, were renowned for their sad singing ... and ... we also attracted many enemies ... but we didn't keep most of them for ourselves ... we shared them out amongst the Fireforces.

Operation Kodak: Jitter Campaign Malvernia: January/March, 1977

Early in the year, it was finally realised by the powers-that-be, that as long as Malvernia remained a safe haven in Mozambique, the terrorists had food, shelter, arms and ammunition on the very doorstep of their operational areas. We were accordingly tasked to jitter the place in the hope that FRELIMO would become demoralised and withdraw to Mapai.

During the initial briefing we were given strict and solemn instructions not to damage any buildings in the village, by the very serious-minded Brigadier at Com-Ops.

The Officer Commanding of the Special Air Service, Major Brian Robinson, who had a dry sense of humour, burst out laughing.

'Don't worry, Ron,' Brian promised, 'I'll detail some of my men to follow behind yours with buckets of cement and trowels. If any of your lads knock holes in the plaster, the Special Air Service, will patch 'em up so the Freds'll never notice.'

His suggestion and humour was clearly wasted on the Brigadier who viewed him with stony disapproval.

I gave the task to Captain John Murphy and his Territorial Army soldiers ... known by them as *Murphy's Heavies.*

They did their job to such good effect that the FRELIMO used to move out of Malvernia village every evening and leave it in possession of the Scouts, who would stay there all night, only returning to Rhodesia just prior to first light.

Unfortunately, we were forbidden to occupy the village permanently, although we could have done with ease.

Then, the original plan backfired, because far from withdrawing completely as we had hoped, they sent in sizeable reinforcements until their numbers reached battalion strength.

They also beefed up and deepened their defensive systems and brought up a large number of eighty two millimetre mortars, plus the very unpleasant one hundred and twenty two millimetre forty tubed rocket launcher, known as Stalin's organ, which the Russians had used with great effect against the Germans in World War-2.

Once we saw our plans had gone awry and were not going to work, we decided to leave the FRELIMO in relative peace. However, before doing so we couldn't resist planting a mine in the main street of Malvernia as a farewell gesture . . . it blew up a truck loaded with FRELIMO soldiers inflicting a large number of casualties.

The jitter plan was resurrected shortly afterwards though, this time with the hope we might starve the FRELIMO garrison out. The railway line by this time, was firmly out of commission as a result of various operations, so minelaying parties were despatched daily into Mozambique in an attempt to deny the enemy logistical support by road. We were refused air support, although this would clearly have been the ideal method of keeping the roads clear of vehicles during daylight hours, and had to rely completely on ambushes and landmines . . . neither of which were easy to utilise due to the softness and sandy nature of the ground and the flat terrain, creating anti-tracking difficulties.

The lack of cover too, meant our parties often had to be right up against the road to trigger their ambushes, which was not a happy method of operating.

During one of those early morning attacks on an outpost outside Malvernia, we lost a very fine sniper, Sergeant Clive Mason. Clive was a complete professional in his field, but for some inexplicable reason he got carried away during the firefight and stood up. While on his feet he killed six FRELIMO soldiers, but was then himself shot in the head . . . he died instantly.

Combined Operations: Com-Ops is Formed: March, 1977

When I arrived in Malaya in the early fifties it was as a very raw, inexperienced and recently promoted corporal. But even in my inexperience I could not fail to see the general air of demoralization and disorganisation which was prevalent amongst the armed forces, the civil administration and the civilian population as a whole.

The air stunk of defeat. The Chinese communist terrorists clearly had the upper hand . . . and . . . no one quite knew how to tackle the problem.

As was to be repeated in Rhodesia two decades later, the conventional troops of the very conventionally minded army plodded or drove in patrol strength from rubber plantation to rubber plantation, skirting the fringes of the jungles, and only very seldom making contact with the enemy.

The enemy, meanwhile, was like a will-o'-the-wisp, darting with impunity between them, killing and maiming civilians and ambushing at will.

The Police were prime targets and they had taken heavy punishment.

A British General, Briggs, was commissioned to study the situation and make recommendations. For the first time some sane thinking entered the war, for he almost immediately established two basic principles to be pursued with determination, if the terrorist menace was to be defeated. Firstly, the Chinese terrorists had to be denied easy access to the population and; secondly, their base areas deep in the jungle, which had hitherto been inaccessible to conventional troops who had not been trained for this role, were to be attacked and destroyed.

To implement the recommendations of General Briggs, arrangements were made to move the entire rural Chinese population in the affected areas and resettle them in protected villages, to get them out of the way of the enemy. And, a disbanded regiment which had come into being during the North African campaign in World War-2 . . . the Special Air Service Regiment, was ordered to be reformed and used for deep penetration into the humid jungles of Malaya.

A Rhodesian contingent of volunteers was raised and trained in Rhodesia to become 'C' Squadron, the Special Air Service (Malayan Scouts) . . . A and B Squadrons were British Army formations.

Shortly afterwards, while all this was in the melting pot, the High Commissioner for Malaya

was ambushed and shot dead by Chinese communist terrorists in an extremely well-planned and expertly conducted ambush.

The High Commissioner, escorted by a company of troops supported by armoured cars, was shot and killed while in the centre of the escorting convoy.

The terrorists expertly withdrew during the subsequent confusion without any loss to themselves.

This was too much for the British Government and, to stabilize and reverse the losing situation, they created a new post which was to have a far reaching effect upon the war . . . the post of Supreme Commander or Supremo as the new incumbent was to become known.

General Gerald Templar was selected for this post and in their choice the British struck a winner.

Armed with extraordinary powers, General Templar set about his task with vigour. His first objective was to quickly establish an overall strategy for the conduct of the war. Then, having achieved that, he set about attaining the total co-operation of all arms of the Security Forces engaged in the fight. This had long been a jaw-breaking problem area with friction, in-fighting, petty jealousy and self interest, taking precedence over the prime requirements of the war . . . the destruction of the enemy.

Templar boded no argument . . . he was ruthless. Forty eight hours after taking over, he fired the Commissioner of Police . . . several senior officers were reputed to have nearly choked on their gins and tonics when they heard the news. But then they too became part of a sudden flood of prematurely retired, relieved or plain downright sacked senior army officers, who suddenly found themselves wistfully looking at flying fish from the decks of troop-ships ploughing through the southern oceans on their way back to England, home and beauty.

Having tuned everyone up, Templar, who had quickly realised the war could not be won by military means alone, drew the civil administration into the planning phases, ensuring finally that the political, military and civil administrations dovetailed neatly into his place for them in the common strategy to defeat the enemy.

The effect was soon felt at all levels in civil and military circles and, imbued with a newly found sense of purpose, the morale of the whole country soon reached a high level.

With this lesson learnt some twenty one years before, one would have expected the Rhodesians, when faced with a similar situation, would have adopted the same measures as the British in appointing a Supreme Commander.

The grumblings of what could definitely be categorised as civil rather than an insurgency unrest, started with riots in the African townships, civil disobedience in the country areas, intimidation campaigns directed at tribesmen by the African Nationalists, the appearance of the first plastic explosives, grenades and firearms in the hands of a few Russian-trained black terrorists, commenced and escalated gradually from the early nineteen sixties.

The British South Africa Police, jealously regarded the maintenance of law and order as their preserve . . . a preserve in which they would broach no interference by the military.

Until the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland came into being in 1953 and the Federal Government took over the responsibility for Defence, the British South Africa Police were, by statute of law, the first line of Rhodesia's defence. Elements of the Police had provided the first officers and non-commissioned officers for Rhodesia's contribution to the British Empire's effort against the Germans in World War-1 in East Africa, and it was they too who provided the nucleus on the formation of the Southern Rhodesia Staff Corps in the mid 1930's, and the first officers and non-commissioned officers for the Rhodesian African Rifles, formed for service against the Japanese in Burma, during World War-2.

To the upper echelons of the Police, it should thus not be surprising to realise, the Army were amusingly regarded as upstarts . . . Johnny come latelies.

The Army, who were always routinely stood by to *bring their harps to the party,* and who were even sometimes invited by the Police to put on flag marches through urban African

townships and the tribal trust lands, and to guard key points, were never, when the Police guns started to pop, frustratingly, ever *invited to play.*

There were reasons too, other than the overweening pride of the British South Africa Police, which were totally valid . . . political reasons . . . very sound ones too from Rhodesia's point of view, particularly when the Federation started crumbling towards dissolution.

In the beginning Rhodesia had expected to be the senior partner of the three Federal territories of Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia), Nyasaland (now Malawi) and, of course, Southern Rhodesia. She had cheerfully abrogated her rights of defence against external aggression to a higher Federal Government authority, because she could not, at the time, envisage an external threat against her where she would be left in the lurch by Britain and her sister nations in the British Commonwealth.

Then, when the chips were down and the African Nationalist drums started to beat, there was no-way any Rhodesian Government was going to consent, in those dying Federal days, to a handover of law and order responsibility, on a martial law basis, to a Federal Government defence agency.

Thus, the State of Emergency concept, without the need for martial law, came into being, where the Police, should they so decide they didn't have the muscle to handle things, could hand particular situations over on an ad hoc basis to the Army to deal with, either in tandem with the Police or on their own.

In theory it was a simple, satisfactory and workable arrangement, but in practise, the practise stayed a theory . . . for the Police, thank you very much, always considered they were capable of handling things.

In fact, at the time of the dissolution of the Federation in 1963, it was said that the then Commissioner of the British South Africa Police was so confident of handling things, he recommended to the Rhodesian Government that they do without an Army after the Federal breakup . . . an enlarged Police Support Unit would be able to manage things. Fortunately, the Rhodesian Government, even though there were no great military strategists amidst their ranks either, decreed otherwise.

Nevertheless, the thinking that the Police should handle things until *they* decided to hand a situation over, continued to prevail until this culminated in the Sinoia battle on the 28th of April, 1966, when, in a pure and fairly large-scale military type operation, the British South Africa Police, with local Police Reservists, forming stop groups and sweep lines, and regular uniformed, Criminal Investigation Department and Special Branch personnel, both black and white, forming assault groups and with the support of Air Force helicopters, they wiped out seven ZANLA terrorists in a decisively sharp contact.

There was no doubt about it that in this action the Police did well . . . and they suffered no casualties . . . but they were more than just lucky.

The battle and the day are now commemorated with a public holiday in the new State of Zimbabwe as *Chimurenga* day . . . the day they remember as the official start to the war.

It also commemorates the last occasion the Police were allowed to go it on their own. Everyone, except a few senior officers in the Police, realised it was ridiculous. The Police were clearly on shaky ground. On one hand they insisted on carrying out operations without calling for Army assistance, which, exemplified by the Sinoia battle, obviously fell within the military province; while on the other hand, ignoring the dangers to his men in the field, the Commissioner of Police of the time, hidebound by a thinking which perpetuated bad habits in the name of tradition, insisted his men were *Policemen* not *soldiers.*

To carry his woolly-headed thinking further, he dogmatically insisted that before his men . . . then armed with pre-World War-1 short muzzled Lee Enfield rifles (they were not allowed grenades because it was considered un-Policemanlike) . . . bush-tackled the terrorists, who were armed with modern Russian weapons, grenades and rockets . . . they first take off their working dress of khaki drill and grey, and replace it with riot dress suits of outstandingly visible dark blue denim.

The Policemen out at the *sharp end,* needless to say, ignored this ridiculous instruction.

It clearly couldn't carry on like this, and so finally, as a fairly reasonable and workable compromise for the situation at the time, a concept of war by committee . . . the JOC, or Joint Operational Command system . . . on similar lines to the British system used in Malaya . . . was adopted.

At top level, all services would co-operate during insurgency operations on an equal footing. At lower levels in the field, when an anti-terrorist operation was mounted, a Joint Operational Command would be formed, consisting of an Army appointee, an Air Force appointee, a Police appointee and a Special Branch appointee . . . all of whom had an equal say in what action should be taken during an operation.

It was a basically unsatisfactory system . . . as Napoleon said: *'One bad General is better than two good ones'* . . . but it says something for the high calibre of the lower ranking echelons of the Security Forces, not only that it worked at all, but that most of the time it actually worked fairly well.

At the rarified higher command levels within the Rhodesian Security Forces alas, where not only was a spade not always a spade, but where a set of overalls was not something one donned to work under the car, but a type of monkey-suit which an officer put on to drink his gin in genteel discomfort, there was more acrimony between services than a spirit of co-operation.

War by concensus, was not the way the war was going to be won. We, the Security Forces, were crying out for vigorous and virile leadership . . . it was the only way we were going to get anywhere . . . but no-one who could have done anything about it did so.

It was perhaps as it was in Remarque's World War-1 classic, *All Quiet on the Western Front.*

'– little Albert Kropp, the clearest thinker amongst us and therefore only a lance corporal . . .'

So the arguments about the Supremo system of commanding the Security Forces continued as the war escalated. The nominations for the position were always there and . . . always in triplicate. The Police and the Army, of course, considered the appointment of an Air Force Supremo as untenable, the Police considered the appointment of an Army Supremo as unthinkable, while the Army and the Air Force jointly considered the appointment of a Police Supremo as unspeakable.

Nevertheless, it must now be clear to all that as it was war, the job should have gone to a soldier, and much earlier than it did and that he should have been given far wider powers.

But the Government, outwardly stern and confident, vacillated and fidgetted nervously, beneath the comforting cover of a blanket of censorship, in case the appointment of a Supremo became a tacit admission that the terrorist insurgency, which was constantly dismissed as being well under control, had actually blossomed into a full-scale civil war . . . something they refused to publicly admit right up until the end. It also crossed their minds, so it was said, that if they built up the authority of the Security Forces so there was a commander perched on the top of one great pyramid, rather than one balanced on each of three lesser ones, they might, if they continued to approach the war in their habitually flabby manner, find themselves booted out of office and banished back to their farms, in a military *coup d' etat.*

So it was not to be until the 24th March, 1977 . . . almost five years after the war had hotted up in earnest, that General Walls was officially appointed as Supremo, and his headquarters established in Milton Buildings in Salisbury. Even then the acrimony and back-biting surrounding the appointment still remained, and his powers were kept in much more restrictive confines than had been the case with General Templar in Malaya.

I was sent for and told the Special Air Service and the Selous Scouts would, in future, fall directly under the command of General Walls, and only be under Army Headquarters for purposes of administration.

I viewed this news, privately, with some misgiving, for I could see that General Hickman, who had replaced General Walls as Army Commander, was understandably, going to resent losing command of his top echelon troops.

It was common knowledge there was no love lost between these two officers for reasons best

known to themselves, and while I enjoyed working with General Walls, I did not relish becoming a bone of contention between the two.

I also deduced, correctly as it turned out, that the move was likely to make the Selous Scouts even more unpopular amongst the Staff at Army Headquarters.

When I looked at the newly formed Staff of the Combined Operations Headquarters or Com-Ops, as it became known, I had even more misgivings. There was not a single officer who had any experience at all of Special Force operations and, indeed, the Air Force turned out to have a better grasp of our capabilities and limitations than any of the Army personnel there.

Com-Ops now took over the effective direction of the war, including in this direction the allocation of troop levels and air effort to the various Joint Operational Commands, which embraced the tasking of the Special Air Service and Selous Scouts.

Unwisely on my part, my first operations' conference with the new Staff, ended in my having a violent confrontation over operational policy, with the new Com-Ops Military Planning Commander.

My view was that the FRELIMO administrative and logistical back-up provided the skeleton for the ZANLA war effort. Their flesh and muscle depended totally on this skeleton . . . and I thought we should immediately set out to break those bones by hitting all FRELIMO complexes housing terrorists or forming part of their logistics set-up.

He violently disagreed.

His view was we should be fully committed internally and the Special Air Service, now being fully employed in their correct role for the first time, should concentrate exclusively on external effort. He was unable, or did not wish to see, that although the Special Air Service were able, and indeed did, carry out some excellent operations, we had the means of tackling operations they couldn't attempt, because we were far bigger and because we had African soldiers, which they didn't.

External operations, although rarely more dangerous than our internal operations, always excited interest and enthusiasm in the troops and proved to be a great morale booster. They also provided a welcome break from the general tedium which often bugged our internal pseudo operators.

Getting nowhere, I finally asked for a meeting with the full Com-Ops Staff where I put my points over forcibly, stressing the indelible mark we had already made on the terrorists' external build up and their logistics.

My arguments made no impression on the Com-Ops Staff either, so as a last resort, I exercised my right of direct access to General Walls, which I still retained, to whom I put my case directly.

General Walls did not hesitate to back me up and the Selous Scouts immediately resumed their position at the old *status quo* . . . needless to say, our popularity rating with the Com-Ops Staff didn't bear discussion!

The concept of a Supremo and a Combined Operational Headquarters was, and I had always said it, the only correct one, but the execution of the concept once it came into being was, in my opinion, sadly misguided.

General Walls' task was and should have remained the overall direction of the war. In carrying out this function he had to ensure, like Templar did, that a total unified effort embracing the civil and the military was being properly planned, co-ordinated and effected at all levels throughout the country.

It was indefensibly ridiculous for General Walls or his Staff to concern themselves with which village in the bush, a three-man stick from the Special Air Service, or the Selous Scouts should be deployed, and who should release the helicopters to support them.

This was, and should have stayed the sole responsibility of the Army and Air Force Commanders and their Staffs, whose plans would have been the logical follow-on from the strategical guide lines put out by Com-Ops.

The immediate result of Com-Ops taking overall physical, as well as the detailed day to day

OPERATION AZTEC CROSS BORDER RAID ON JORGE DO LIMPOPO, MAPAI AND MABALANE: MAY/JUNE 1977.

35. Cross the border and turn right up the power line.

36. Then, turn left onto the road parallel to the Malvernia/Maputo railway track.

37. Air Force Dakota landing at Mapai with supplies. It was destroyed by enemy groundfire on take-off.

38. Aztec - Air strike and parachute assault by the Rhodesian Light Infantry on Madulo Pan ZANLA base. Note K-car prowling to the right of picture.

39. Aztec – Captured Jeep mounting a Soviet B10 recoilless rifle, turned to Selous Scout use.

40. Aztec – column vehicle on a Mozambique *main* road.

41. Aztec – Unimog mounting a 50 calibre Browning and a 20 mm cannon.

42. Aztec – . . . and the rest!

43. Captain Rob Warracker.

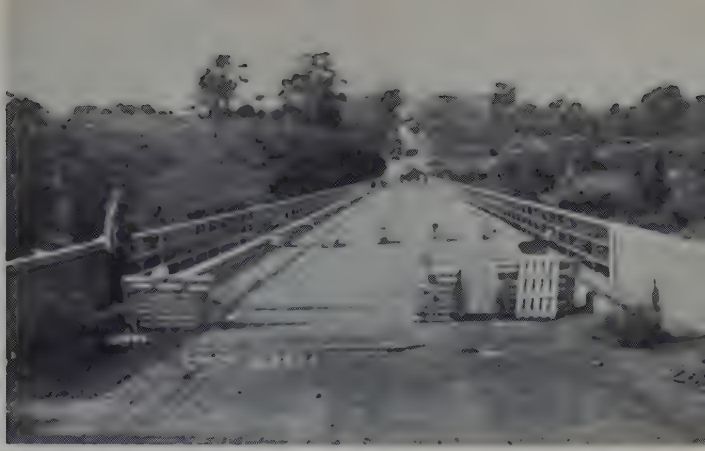
44. Captain Charlie Small.

45. Lieutenant Dale Collett.

46. Major John Murphy.

OPERATION VIRILE – DESTROY BRIDGES BETWEEN DOMBE AND ESPUNGABERA: NOVEMBER/DECEMBER, 1977.

47. Before . . .



48. After . . .

50. *Below:* A home-made SNEB rocket launcher mounted on a Mercedes Unimog – a *Rhodesian organ!*

49. *Below:* A gunner keeps a wary eye out for the enemy.

51. and 52. Virile – That bus . Note Soviet 12,7 MG mounted on roof, the 50 calibre Brownings at back, and the side screens operated by pulley.

53. Virile – They frightened the enemy too!

54. Virile – Column rampages through Goi Goi.

AUXILIARIES (REFORMED TERRORISTS) OF BISHOP MUZOREWA AND NDABANINGI SITOLE – SO-CALLED SPEAR OF THE PEOPLE.

55. After so-say coming in from the bush.

56. After being armed or re-armed.

57. After being deployed to keep *law and order* on behalf of the Interim Government.

58. After being tricked into a meeting with real ZANLA terrorists at Wedza.

control of the Army's running of the war, was that the Army Commander, General Hickman, lost his rightful operational command . . . not only of his Special Force units, but also of his regular and territorial troops.

The only command left to him was purely an administrative one, and he already had his Chief of Staff, a Major General, to attend to that, so he became to all effects, a paper general, robbed of his Army . . . with only one battle . . . a bitter running battle with Com-Ops, left for him to fight.

His staff at Army Headquarters, particularly the G-Staff, were allowed nothing further to do with the planning of the war and were only able to concern themselves with new organisations, amendments to staff tables and training matters. Frequently, the Brigadier at Com-Ops, would task Army Headquarter's Staff directly on A and Q matters, going over the heads of the two major generals commanding those departments. The Combined Operations' Brigadier became, in effect, the Commander of the Army. It was a very strange and unsatisfactory state of affairs, which was hardly improved by the Army Commander seldom being made privy to Special Force operations.

After about a year of this, I sought interview with the Army Commander, General Hickman. I expressed my dissatisfaction with the tasking at Com-Ops, for to be fair, they simply had too much on their plates.

I suggested a Special Forces Brigade should be created. I visualised that Com-Ops, free of the burden of planning operations, would give us their overall strategy, detail targets or target areas and leave the Special Forces' Brigadier to get on with the job.

The Special Forces' Brigadier would decide whether it was a task best suited to a Selous Scout or a Special Air Service type operation, and then call the relevant commanding officer and task him accordingly.

General Hickman was enthusiastic over the concept which I had recommended, and particularly the Special Force Intelligence Centre I envisaged, which was an amalgamation of the Special Air Service's and Selous Scouts' Intelligence Sections, souped up by officers of the Army Intelligence Corps.

There would be two wings, an external wing manned principally by the Special Air Service, and an internal wing manned by the Selous Scouts. Each wing would be divided into ZIPRA and ZANLA sections and these again would be subdivided to fit the terrorist operational areas.

Each terrorist area would be looked after by an officer and a small staff responsible for keeping up to date with the intelligence our callsigns gleaned in the field.

General Hickman gave top priority to the suggested new concept and within weeks a large operations room was built, temporary office accommodation provided and the necessary staff appointed.

A colonel was appointed the new Commander, Special Forces.

Then, just as things were settling in smoothly and intelligence began to be churned out, the axe fell.

The Special Branch attached to Selous Scouts were, unknown to me, totally opposed to the whole concept and, quite wrongly, regarded it as an Army attempt to usurp their own responsibility to the Selous Scouts . . . I considered it as a supplement.

The truth was the Special Branch members attached to the Selous Scouts were thin on the ground and could hardly cope with their ever-increasing work load. What's more, it was quite apparent that the Police Commissioner, P. K. Allum, was hardly sympathetic, so far as their needs were concerned, and had refused to sanction staff increases. He even, for reasons which were presumably for the *best* exigencies of his service, ordered the transfer of the most experienced Special Branch Superintendent with the Selous Scouts, who had been in at the Regiment's formation in fact, from the *hot seat* to a Criminal Investigation Department command, where the most important part of his responsibilities concerned the theft of bicycles within Salisbury and its environs.

General Walls, however, added the weight of his own dissatisfaction to the new concept, and

ordered a conference be convened to review it. It became very clear that the minds which mattered had been well and truly made up before the conference started, and, when it did, the Special Forces' Brigade Headquarters got short shrift . . . instead of the command of the Special Forces . . . and were left with nothing to do. After a period of vacillation they were given the job of running the *Pfumo ne Vanhu* – the Spear of the People, campaign . . . the auxiliary terrorist concept.

The Special Air Service went their way and we went ours, and the piles of intelligence the staff of the new unit had collated, lay about gathering dust, because there were no people available to process it.

And so, as in the Malayan insurgency, Rhodesia at last had its own Combined Operations Headquarters . . . its own commander in control. But there, unfortunately, the resemblance ended . . .

There were no volcanic-like eruptions emanating from the Milton Building power-house . . . no landborne equivalent of the Blighty bound ships with despondent axed officers leaning over the rails looking at flying fish, as there had been with Templar in Malaya. Everything just bumbled on, more or less as it always had . . . no one made any brilliant and far-reaching strategic decisions . . . and no one at all was sacked for their unsatisfactory part in the day to day running of the war . . . and no bright lads were plucked up from below, hurriedly laden with rank and given *carte blanche* to get on with it.

The only conclusion must be that every senior officer in the Rhodesian Security Forces was highly satisfactory in the conduct of his duties . . . but if this were the case, it makes one wonder how it was that at the end . . . even if we were never defeated in the field . . . we came to be swamped?

Operation Aztec: Attack on Jorge do Limpopo, Mapai and Madulo Pan: May/June, 1977

Com-Ops ordered that in view of the Rhodesian Security Forces' failure to neutralise or cut down to any great extent, the movement of ZANLA terrorists to the *Repulse* operational area, that multiple strikes against ZANLA should be launched into Mozambique.

Commencing at the border, the 2nd-Battalion, the Rhodesia Regiment, a Territorial Army unit, would mount a penetration of up to ten kilometres into Mozambique, with the task of disrupting and taking out all ZANLA staging posts in the border area.

At the same time, a group of Rhodesian Light Infantry would be helicoptered into the ZANLA complex known as Rio . . . situated almost upon the Nuanetsi River . . . while another group would parachute into the Madulo Pan ZANLA base area, which Schulie, Mpoto and the Rhodesian Air Force had successfully neutralised once before.

The Selous Scouts were ordered to form a flying column to enter Mozambique and take out all ZANLA camps along the line of rail as far as Jorge do Limpopo.

Having taken Jorge do Limpopo, they were ordered to stay there astride the main access route to Rhodesia for approximately three weeks. During which time they would send forces east to Mapai and Pafuri to attack the ZANLA camps there.

I gave the column's operational command to Captain John Murphy . . . the overall commander being Major Bert Sachse, based at the Chiredzi fort.

When I briefed John Murphy on his mission . . . his first external raid . . . I made it crystal clear he could likely be in for a stickier time than he had ever dreamed possible while serving with his old outfit . . . the very fine US Marine Corps in Vietnam.

There would be nothing to parallel the instant and massive air support he would have had there if he got into difficulties. He would be almost completely on his own . . . there would be the sparing support, on call only, of two old Hawker Hunter fighter bombers . . . but he would only be permitted them if his difficulties were in the extremis.

In spite of this, although his problems were great . . . they were not as great as those Rob Warracker had faced on his raids into Mozambique . . . for he was, at least, allowed *some* air support.

The major reason for the stinginess of the air effort on call, was not by that time political . . . it was economic . . . the ammunition used by the Hawker Hunters was expensive . . . very expensive . . . and with the country staggering under the burden of United Nation mandatory sanctions, Rhodesia just couldn't afford the foreign exchange to expend ammunition ad lib.

The column was to consist of one hundred and ten men split into various teams . . . each of which would have their own predesignated sub-task to perform during the raid . . . including a strong mortar group for close-support.

L9. Operation *Aztec*. Map of flying column attack on Jorge do Limpopo and Mapai: May/June, 1977.

After completing detailed rehearsals, the column vehicles . . . consisting of heavily armed Unimogs, a Willys Jeep, captured in a previous raid and now mounting a captured Russian eighty two millimetre B10 recoilless rifle, a Daf ten ton truck, captured in a previous raid carrying the explosives for demolitions, and our two home-produced armoured cars . . . the Pigs . . . were loaded onto the flat-cars of a military train and transported along the line of rail and dropped off forty kilometres north of Malvernia. Once there, final preparations were completed and last-minute rehearsals carried out.

As was usual, the Selous Scouts were dressed in FRELIMO uniforms and their vehicles painted in FRELIMO colours.

Soon after last light on the 28th of May, the column crossed the border into Mozambique using the same route taken by Butch Duncan on the first raid into Mapai.

There were, I must say, reservations expressed about the wisdom of using this route . . . in case the enemy were awaiting us in ambush . . . but I reminded the chaps that even if they were waiting, their incredibly low calibre would make it easy for the column to cut through them. Besides, I doubted if there would be any problems, because knowing FRELIMO, they would have relaxed by then and I didn't think they had seriously considered we'd use the same route in again.

However, to make sure, the bush track leading to the cut-line of the Cabora Bassa powerline was cleared by engineers who went in at the head of the column.

It was a slow and laborious job in the dark, which delayed the column slightly, but just after first light, the column reached the powerlines and turned south-west. Then, more quickly than they had anticipated, the column reached the road running parallel to the Malvernia to Maputo railway line . . . and turned left.

Having overcome the initial difficulties, it was relatively easy for John Murphy to synchronise the column's time of arrival in the area of Madulo Pan . . . the next stop south past Malvernia along the line of rail . . . so they were in position and ready to assist the Rhodesian Light Infantry paratroopers if they unexpectedly came up against heavy ZANLA resistance . . . otherwise, being transportless, they might have found themselves in difficulties.

At 11h00 . . . precisely on schedule . . . air strikes were put in at Madulo Pan, followed by the paratroop assault of some forty commandos.

We were interested to hear afterwards, that when the Rhodesian Light Infantry paratroopers swept the area of Madulo Pan, they found a vast litter of skulls and human bones which could only have been relics left over from the Canberra bomber raid, which Schulie and Mpoto had brought onto target.

It was not long before John Murphy was satisfied there was no requirement for the column to stay to assist the Rhodesian Light Infantry, so they carried on to Jorge do Limpopo . . . blasting a small section of railway line while en route.

On the outskirts of Jorge do Limpopo they were engaged by scattered rocket and mortar fire.

John Murphy asked for air support and I cleared for the standby Hawker Hunter fighter bombers to go in, which they did, quickly neutralising the enemy positions.

I had suggested to General Walls he spend the day camping at Inkomo, which was a practise he had followed fairly frequently as a means of relaxation, so he could distance himself at least slightly from the omnipresence of the war.

Doing this did not adversely affect the war effort in any way, because my Signals Officer used to run a telephone line to the spreading msasas under which the General pitched his tent, so he had at all times immediate access to his command-net.

Every morning while he camped with us, the Scouts' Intelligence Officer would take him the daily sitreps and give him a detailed briefing on the happenings of the previous day.

I had been particularly anxious to have General Walls immediately available at Inkomo during the course of the raid . . . so . . . if the need arose to go beyond our limits of exploitation, he would be to hand to make immediate personal assessments and even discuss matters with John Murphy direct in the field should it be necessary.

He walked into the operations room to see how things were going just after the column had taken Jorge do Limpopo and while John was reporting the capture of a large quantity of stores, equipment and vehicles.

John Murphy went on to say that it appeared, from information gathered on the ground, that the main terrorist base was no longer at Jorge do Limpopo, but had been moved back to Mapai.

I immediately suggested to General Walls, who was casually dressed in Burmuda shorts and a T-shirt, that he give permission for John to immediately take his column on to Mapai and this time . . . destroy it utterly and completely.

General Walls agreed . . . so I gave John the necessary orders.

However, to protect their escape route and to ensure they were not left out on a limb . . . it had been intended in the first place to send only a small portion of the column to clear Mapai

. . . John Murphy needed additional men. He couldn't take the chance of abondoning Jorge do Limpopo because of its dominating position.

The Rhodesian Light Infantry had cleared Madulo Pan and were doing nothing so, having cleared it with General Walls, I told John to send his transport back to Madulo Pan, pick up the Rhodesian Light Infantry and bring them back to garrison Jorge do Limpopo, while he went to Mapai.

Later, once the Rhodesian Light Infantry had taken over at Jorge do Limpopo, the column left. On route the column experienced only minor and scattered opposition . . . until they reached the Mapai air strip.

A large contingent of FRELIMO and ZANLA were dug in and apparently had every intention of defending it . . . they were well equipped too, with sixty millimetre mortars and a 14,5 millimetre heavy machinegun, as well as smallarms.

A short but savage firefight developed during which the enemy were either killed or put to flight . . . the column suffered no casualties.

By this time it was almost last light . . . and . . . news of our incursions had been broadcast by Mozambique, and Rhodesia as usual, was being condemned for naked aggression . . . even South Africa had a go at us . . . but they were, I was told later, having their thumbs severely screwed by the administration of America's President Carter.

General Walls gave the order to be ready to withdraw the column at a moment's notice.

I gave John Murphy a pre-warning of what was likely to happen . . . stressing that I was keeping my fingers crossed in the hope he would have time to finish the job.

At first light on the 30th May, after having based up for the night, the column carried on to Mapai, leaving a small group to hold the airfield.

Prior to launching an attack on Mapai, the Hawker Hunters were again released by Com-Ops and committed to carry out air strikes on ZANLA and FRELIMO strong points forming a defensive perimeter around the village.

After they had been softened up, the column moved in with all guns firing . . . coming under a severe mortar barrage as they did so, but fortunately, the enemy achieved little and their fire was largely inaccurate. The Hawker Hunters were again called for but, unfortunately, they weren't able to pinpoint the mortar positions.

After mopping up, the column captured a vast treasure of ammunition together with a large number of ZANLA vehicles, but we discovered afterwards from radio intercepts, that we missed the greater part of the ZANLA arms and ammunition stock, which they had dispersed into small dumps around the village.

The airfield was in a serviceable condition, so I cleared with Com-Ops for a Dakota to airlift in a team of mechanics to make repairs to some of the captured ZANLA vehicles which, although almost new, were non-runners because of neglect or mechanical ignorance.

I also later sent in an extra demolition team to assist the column by another Dakota, for there was a lot of work to be done. This team was, in reality, my Reconnaissance Troop which, since the death of Rob Warracker, had been commanded by Captain Neil Kriel.

The column got down to blowing up and demolishing every building or installation in Mapai, so they could never again be used to house ZANLA terrorists or to store terrorist supplies.

During that afternoon, John Murphy reported they were running low on explosives and mortar bombs . . . also that he required extra men, if they were avilable, to help hold the airfield until the column had finished at Mapai..

I immediately arranged another Dakota flight . . . the third, to take in the extra stuff and the men he required.

By the time it had been loaded up and had flown to Mapai it was after dark, and it had to be guided in by marking the flight path with truck lights and the use of Mega-Blitz portable strobe lights.

At 20h00, having been unloaded, the pilot commenced to take-off procedures and moved the Dakota down the runway, gathering speed as it did so.

Some of the enemy . . . either FRELIMO or ZANLA . . . we shall never know which, had wormed back to the airfield under cover of darkness and had been watching our goings on, awaiting their opportunity . . . and, as the aircraft started to take off, they seized it, and opened up with RPG-7 rockets and tracers.

One RPG-7 rocket smashed into the starboard engine which immediately caught alight . . . the winking tracers also found their target in the cockpit . . . the aircraft slewed sideways off the runway and collapsed.

In moments the flames climbed high into the sky as the blaze caught.

The passengers tumbled out onto the airstrip . . . as did the pilot after attempting to help his co-pilot, but it was no use . . . for the co-pilot . . . Flight Lieutenant Bruce Collocott had been killed by that first burst of terrorist tracer fire.

The following morning at first light, an Air Force salvage team came in by helicopter and salvaged what they could from the almost totally burned out wreckage. Then, Captain Charlie Small assisted by Lieutenant Chris Gough placed charges and destroyed what was left, so the pieces couldn't be produced later as evidence of *Rhodesian aggression*. Afterwards, John Murphy ordered the column to move back to Jorge do Limpopo.

While the raid was in progress, the Air Force had continually, during the hour of daylight, maintained patrols of high flying aircraft keeping a watchful eye on the possiblity of enemy reinforcements being moved up from Barragem.

Their efforts had been fruitful too, six FRELIMO vehicles loaded with troops, were destroyed in air strikes called in by them, which clearly cooled FRELIMO's martial ardour, as they made no more attempts to send up relief forces.

The column, now reinforced with the additional firepower of the captured 14,5 millimetre anti-aircraft weapon captured at the Mapai airfield, got to work digging in and quickly established a defensive perimeter around Jorge do Limpopo.

While the Selous Scouts had been away, the Rhodesian Light Infantry had experienced an interesting time, having been subjected to frequent sneak attacks by groups of both FRELIMO and ZANLA who, presumably, had survived the column's attack.

On Wednesday, 1st June, by now back at Com-Ops, General Walls telephoned to say the Rhodesian Government was under sudden and even greater pressure from the outside world to withdraw our column . . . and . . . it was likely the order to move back would come at any time.

I appreciated the delicacy of the position, but suggested that as Government had still not yet given the order, we might still gain some more useful mileage from the operation, by allowing the column to range even further south along the line of rail, destroying all FRELIMO or ZANLA targets they came upon.

General Walls agreed, after some thought, but stressed that as the re-call was likely to come at any time, twenty kilometres past Jorge do Limpopo was the absolute limit of exploitation he could allow.

Well . . . at least, we could put another twenty kilometres of FRELIMO railway line out of action . . . which was certainly better than nothing.

I passed on General Walls' orders to John Murphy and, leaving the Rhodesian Light Infantry once more to hold Jorge do Limpopo, he set off south without delay taking the whole column with him, before General Walls, the Government or I changed our minds.

They soon covered the twenty kilometres . . . and the next twenty and the next . . . until they reached Mabalane . . . some two hundred kilometres south of Jorge do Limpopo . . . all of this unbeknown to me.

Nestling in the railway siding there, they found a steam crane which was, presumably, on its way north to enable the clearing of the blocked railway line to be commenced. Captain Charlie Small and his demolition assistants blasted it into a heap of useless wreckage.

It had been a fortuitous find, for its destruction put paid to any chance the FRELIMO might have had of clearing the line, at least for many months, until they were able to prevail upon the

kind offices of the South African Railways and borrow a crane from them, as the one we blew up was the only one Mozambique had possessed.

Retiring cautiously, the column noticed some massive concrete culverts carrying the railway track over a large area of perennially wet vlei.

Charlie Small and his men immediately got to work blasting the concrete supports, and either weakened or totally wrecked each section of the whole lengthy structure.

This ensured the railway from Maputo could be used only up to there, and what was more, it was destined to remain completely out of operation until after the war.

The next morning at 05h00, John came up on the radio and gave me a briefing on what he'd been doing.

'I guess I had better ready myself for a Court Marshall,' he said glumly.

'Why do you say that?' I asked in alarm.

'Well, Sir,' he hesitated, 'I'm afraid I've exceeded your orders.'

'What precisely do you mean,' I asked, 'how have you exceeded orders?'

There was a significant . . . and very pregnant silence . . .

'You know that place beginning with *M* for *Mike*?' his voice crackled through the radio static.

My heart sank and I experienced an immediate feeling of utter disbelief as I shot a glance at the operations room map . . . I could scarecely believe it . . . *M* for *Mike* . . . that could only mean Maputo – the old Lourenço Marques . . . the main port of Mozambique . . . they had gone and shot up Maputo!

'Confirm . . . Mike . . . Alpha . . . Papa . . ?' I asked grimly.

It wouldn't be only John Murphy's Court Marshall I would need to worry about . . . it would be mine as well.

'Negative,' said John Murphy, 'I spell . . . Mike . . . Alpha . . . Bravo . . . Alpha . . . Lima . . . Alpha . . . November . . . Echo . . . MABALANE . . .'

I heaved a sigh of relief and picked up the telephone to call General Walls . . . it was just after 06h00.

'Morning, General,' I said to a slightly sleepy General Walls, 'can I give you a sitrep on demolitions the column achieved last night?'

'Go ahead,' he said gruffly.

'Well,' I said cautiously, 'altogether there is now approximately one hundred and twenty kilometres of railway line out of action . . . they also destroyed a large bridge-like culvert taking the line over a large messy area of swamp.'

'Good stuff,' he said approvingly.

'There is one other thing I need to tell you, Sir . . . this one's not so good.'

'Oh, and what's that?' he asked cautiously.

'Well, you know what the chaps are like, Sir . . . they tend to get the bit between their teeth . . . no stopping them sometimes . . . they've exceeded their limits of exploitation . . . quite a bit too.'

'Tell me,' he thundered . . . clearly thoroughly alarmed, 'how far did they go?'

'Can you see that town on your map which begins with *Mike*, Sir?'

There was a stunned silence . . . and I knew he had jumped to the same wrong conclusion that I had.

'You're not bloody serious?' he sounded like the world was collapsing about his ears.

'No, Sir,' I said quickly, enjoying the joke, 'I think you've got it wrong . . . it is not Mike . . . Alpha . . . Papa . . . it is Mike . . . Alpha . . . Bravo . . .'

'I see,' said General Walls quickly recovering. 'What the hell do you think you are doing anyway? Don't you have any idea of the overall problems confronting Rhodesia? Have you no control over your men? . . . I expect at least a modicum of common sense . . . instead the whole lot of you behave as if you're a lot of damned cowboys . . . why . . ?'

He cooled off later on, but only after he had given me a good dressing down . . . and . . . only after I had assured him the whole column was back at Jorge do Limpopo.

'Well, I was about to call you anyway,' he said, 'you are to get everyone back to Rhodesia as soon as is possible.'

Shortly afterwards, having already demolished or smashed every worthwhile target in Jorge do Limpopo, the column picked up the Rhodesian Light Infantry and commenced the journey back.

At every railway siding along route they paused and carried out further demolitions, paying particular attention to switching points, telephone lines and technical suchlikes, which FRELIMO would find great difficulty in repairing or replacing.

Meanwhile in Rhodesia . . . the Radio Intercept Services . . . monitoring the FRELIMO net . . . telephoned to say they had picked up enemy transmissions which indicated they had made extensive preparations to lay landmines and set up ambushes at numerous spots near the border . . . their avowed intention being to inflict heavy casualties . . . and, if possible, to totally wipe the column out before they could get back to Rhodesia.

I was concerned to hear this and ordered the column to halt and laager up some fifteen kilometres short of the border, until I could get the sappers in to clear the route of landmines.

As things turned out, no signs of FRELIMO soldiers, ZANLA terrorists or landmines were found, so the road was rapidly pronounced safe.

Then, just for good luck, they destroyed another two hundred metres of railway track some five kilometres from Malvernia . . . in addition to another five hundred metres in that vicinity that they had destroyed on their way in . . . and then exfiltrated safely to Rhodesia, without suffering any further casualties.

Lieutenant Chris Gough and a team of three helpers had laid a total of ninety six Russian TMH landmines . . . each booby-trapped with a minimum of five anti-personnel mines. The laying of mines is an arduous business and after a raid like this, another two weeks of paperwork was left to be done, plotting their whereabouts for the all-vital information of men on future operations.

One mine, at least, found a useful target a week later, according to a pick-up by the Radio Intercept Services. A truck loaded with Tanzanian soldiers detonated it and fifteen died in the explosion. This was certainly justice . . . even if rough justice . . . for there can be no doubt that the Russian mine which killed them, had once been stored in Tanzania before being sent down to the ZANLA terrorist organisation, from whom we had captured it.

The total kills achieved on the raid was never accurately ascertained, but even the minimum figures were certainly in excess of sixty.

The major achievements though, had not been kills . . . it had been the final elimination of the Mozambique railways in the Gaza Province along which the ZANLA terrorists, their equipment and stores had been moving to the Rhodesian border, the destruction or capture of a large number of military vehicles being used for the same purposes and the capture of a vast quantity of terrorist war material.

Psychological Warfare: Belated efforts

The Security Forces in every operational area, were feeling an increasing strain as terrorist reinforcements began reaching their target areas with decreasing degrees of difficulty.

Huge tracts of tribal trust land closed within the grip of the terrorists and the tribesmen there began to know only too well who was controlling the whip hand. Unfortunately it was not us, but incredibly few people in Government wished to admit it.

Belatedly, a psyac team . . . a psychological warfare team . . . came into being, but it was hamstrung by an official policy totally out of step with the true state of things, and it achieved very little.

The leader, Major Tony Datton, a business man turned territorial officer, signed up on a permanent basis feeling it his duty as a Rhodesian to get the project firmly on the road. Tony, a highly intelligent man, had a specialized knowledge of business, particularly marketing. His ideas were radical, far too radical, in fact, for the hide-bound higher ranks of the Army, and our friends in the Special Branch eyed him with the utmost suspicion too.

One high ranking person openly branded Tony Datton as a communist during the pre Muzorewa era. Yet, at a much later and sadly, a too late date, he and other detractors like him, suddenly adopted Tony's *radical* ideas as an instant official policy, and feverishly got down to trying to make them work.

It was, I'm afraid, another facet of a fundamental problem those of us in the field had to face throughout the war . . . too little and much too late.

I first met Tony Datton over a beer, when he propounded his theory of psyac . . . a little diffidently I felt at the time. I'm sure he had thought defensively that I would ridicule him as had so many other officers. Instead, I listened with great interest, for what he had to say made exceptionally good sense. It was true what he said, every Rhodesian in an official, a semi-official or even in a non-official position, considered himself an expert in guerrilla warfare and counter insurgency. Yet, it seemed to occur to only a very few, that if we were really as collectively smart as we made ourselves out to be, then surely the war would never have been allowed to get off the ground.

Winning hearts and minds, was a freely bandied about term, but everyone had different ideas as to what it meant, there was no common doctrine. The ideas spanned one extreme where people thought it meant exactly as contained in its dictionary definition to the other where only the initials *WHAM* counted . . . or, to paraphrase the American official from the halcyon days of the Nixon administration: *'If you get them by the short and curlies their hearts and minds will automatically follow.'*

Even worse, from a soldiers viewpoint, there was no laid down military strategy applicable to every operational area. Brigadiers were given their operational areas to command and thereafter each one did his own thing . . . as did the Police . . . as did the Special Branch . . . as did the Internal Affairs . . . they all blamed the politicians for the disasterously developing state of affairs and, needless to say, the politicians blamed everyone else.

After Tony had finished talking, I enquired who was on his team and, as I had suspected, he had been given no African assistants.

We had a long conversation on that first occasion during which I told him that, in general, I thought his ideas first class, but unfortunately, for various reasons, many of them were not feasible. I thought back and told him of my early experiences while in Malaya as a young soldier in the 1950's, and how the same problems and mistakes that were occurring in Rhodesia, had occurred then too.

The British too had known that to win the war, they first had to win the hearts and minds of the locals – it was they who coined the phrase. A psyac team comprising top psychologists had been hastily assembled and after several weeks of intense brain effort, they had evolved a plan for psychological warfare. Fortunately, just prior to it being put into action, one of the team members suggested tentatively, as a late thought, that as the campaign was to be directed towards the Chinese population of Malaya, who supplied some ninety eight percent of the terrorists, it might perhaps be a good idea to get a sample of Chinese opinion.

An eminent Chinese professor from the University of Singapore was approached and he gladly agreed to look at the project. After reading a few pages of the beautifully prepared and weighty report, he was convulsed with laughter.

'No good at all,' he told the crestfallen team, 'utterly useless. This is clearly the product of an occidental trying to gaze into the oriental mind . . . yet, you can no more understand the nuances of Chinese culture, than I can comprehend the nuances of yours. A lot of the proposals you have put up to win hearts and minds, will have exactly the opposite effect.'

Tony looked at me thoughtfully for a few moments.

'It will be at least another year before I get permission and, more importantly, the money, to bring Africans onto my staff,' he said.

No more needed to be said . . . we both understood the official mind.

'I could,' I said tentatively, 'get my African Scouts to look over your ideas.'

Tony jumped at the idea and thereafter, whenever he had a new brainwave, he would

immediately hop in his car and drive out to Inkomo where I would lay on a mixed team of *tame* terrorists and Selous Scout soldiers who would, with an extremely critical eye, soon sort the wheat from the chaff.

With the work he put in, he deserved more success than he actually achieved, but with the niggardly resources dolled out to him, the results were not really surprising.

Tony was a live wire who continually beamed his enquiring mind onto all sorts of problems not really within his territory, and suggesting solutions. He told me once he had been astounded when speaking to numerous soldiers from private to brigadier in the operational areas, to discover that only a very few knew anything about the command structure of ZANLA and ZIPRA, their military organization or the extensive supporting network of civilians, without whom they would be unable to survive and thrive.

I, who was constantly in the thick of things and had thought too that everyone shared the same knowledge, was equally astonished.

'I would like to lay on a lecture, but to do this I need your help,' he said. 'How about calling the lecture: *Know your enemy.*'

I laughed in spite of the seriousness of the situation, because I thought then as I think now, that if by 1977 we still didn't know our enemy and how he functioned, it was a remarkably sad indictment, as we had been at war with him for more than five years.

On the 8th of September, my Intelligence Officer, Alan Lindner, a captured ZIPRA terrorist, a captured ZANLA Detachment Commander and I, walked onto the stage of a large hall in the King George the VI Barracks in Salisbury.

It was packed to capacity, but I noticed the seats in the front reserved for the brigadiers and full colonels showed remarkably sparse occupation . . . only one full colonel had bothered to come.

I introduced my terrorists, both of whom had recently been captured, commencing with the ZANLA Detachment Commander.

Alan Lindner then outlined the terrorist structure, *modus operandi* and their civilian network of contactmen and *mujibas* which was listened to, with close attention.

Afterwards there was a long question time and those present were encouraged to ask the newly *tame* terrorists questions.

At the end of it all, numerous officers came forward to express their thanks, many commenting how amazed they were at their own ignorance. The only full colonel attending, enthusiastically wanted us to set up a sort of travelling circus, to move around the operational areas lecturing the troops.

I thought it an excellent idea too, but stressed that the hardpressed Selous Scouts had neither the time nor the personnel to spare to staff such teams, but I would nevertheless gladly give him every possible assistance if he tried to get a scheme off the ground. I know he tried, but he gained little support and so, like many other constructive ideas which would have helped the Rhodesian war effort, it died a natural death.

Eastern Districts: Internal Operation: September, 1977

In September, Corporal Dabodo and four men were moving along a ridge line when they suddenly made contact with about a hundred terrorists. Realising that attack is the best method of defence, he immediately opened fire on the terrorists, giving them such a fright that they lost all inclination to fight and ran off in all directions. One terrorist was killed and many weapons dropped by the terrorists were captured, as were some important documents.

During October, Corporal Dabodo discovered a terrorist meeting in progress in a tribal village within the *Thrasher* operational area.

He called for Fireforce and directed them into a contact during which five terrorists were killed. Afterwards, when the bodies were checked out, it was discovered that one of the dead was a senior Detachment Commander and the others, Section Commanders. It was discovered also that if the Fireforce had managed to achieve a hundred percent kill of all terrorists present

at the meeting, they would have succeeded in wiping out the entire ZANLA leadership in that operational area.

After the contact, Corporal Dabodo followed up and located two of the terrorists who had escaped the Fireforce and killed them too.

Operation Virile: Destruction of Road Bridges Between Dombe and Espungabera: November/December, 1977

Selous Scout thinking at this time, was that the Rhodesian Light Infantry, the Special Air Service, and the largest part of the Selous Scouts should be switched to the permanent employment of attacking externally based terrorist camps.

There were now so many terrorists in the internal operational areas, and so many more in the pipeline training, or in the process of being infiltrated, that the Security Forces had reached the stage where they had neither the men nor the helicopters to make an appreciable dent on the enemy internally. The Security Forces had been forced to spread themselves too thinly and by doing so, had rendered themselves largely ineffective.

The border minefields, except for a few small portions, which were constantly guarded, had proved to be an expensive failure.

Inside Mozambique a huge new ZANLA base had been built up at Chimoio following our attack on the Nyadzonya Base.

To the south-east was Espungabera, which had assumed formidable proportions as a launching pad for the ZANLA terrorist organisation. To the south, ZANLA concentrations were at Xai Xai on the coast from where they were being transported north by road or rail to Barragem.

From Barragem, the FRELIMO Brigade Headquarters for Gaza Province, they would take bush routes on foot . . . now we had destroyed the railway . . . to get to Malvernia or Pafuri.

Our view was that as it was impossible for us to cover the entire operational area, we should decide which areas were vital ground that had to be held at all costs, which were vital economically or from a communications point of view, and which offered the best killing grounds.

Having decided this and having selected the best killing grounds, we should then endeavour to funnel the terrorists into the latter. The best killing grounds were, without doubt, the Mtoko area and the areas around Umtali where we had regularly achieved tremendous results. Both consisted of savannah country, dominated by hills . . . ideal for good observation points, and for the guiding in of Fireforces.

To achieve this, we felt more operations to neutralise Mozambique road and rail communications systems should be mounted, to make ZANLA terrorist movement into Rhodesia from certain areas difficult or even impossible. By these means, we should, eventually, be able to force them into using the good tar roads in the west of Mozambique, particularly those north of Chimoio, which would channel them into infiltrating the Mtoko and Umtali areas where we wanted them.

Put simply, we had to make them dance to our tune . . . rather than us dancing to theirs . . . as was the existing case.

As a first step to achieving this strategy, we formulated a plan to neutralise the important road leading from Chimoio to Espungabera, by sending in a column to destroy five bridges.

I approached General Walls directly on this issue, because, unfortunately, there was little enthusiasm for it at Com-Ops and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who held firmly that road systems were economic and not military targets . . . even though terrorists travelled on them.

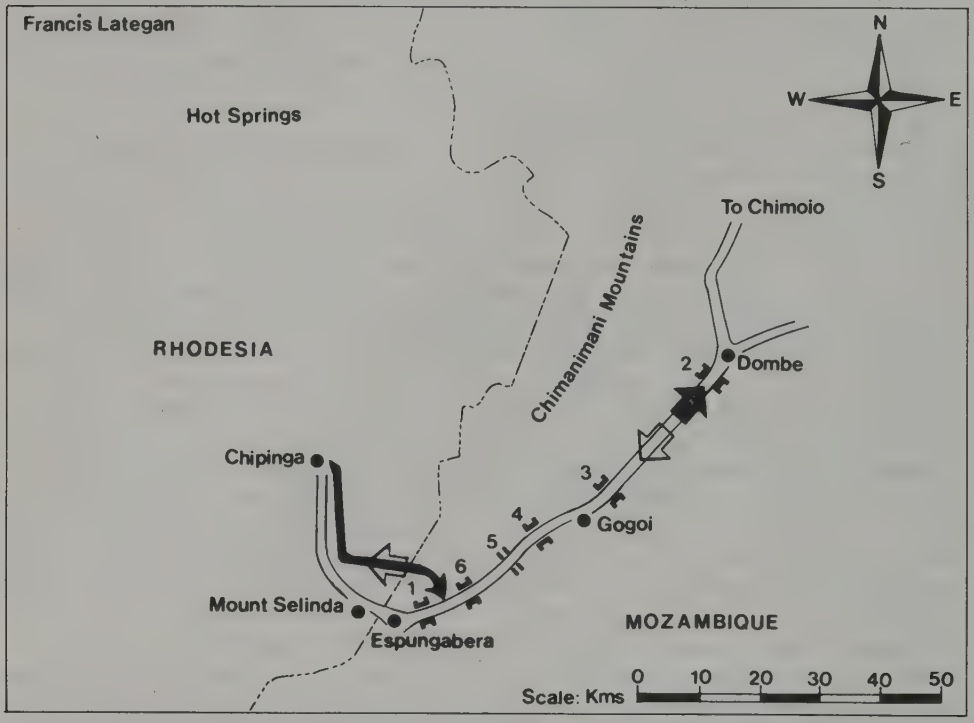
In 1975 we had put forward a plan suggesting we destroy a total of eleven bridges in Mozambique, which would have brought the whole economy of Mozambique to a standstill, as road and rail movement anywhere in the country would have been impossible. But then, as now, those people with their hands on the controls of the Rhodesian war wouldn't hear of it. They considered it only as a last straw tactic if the war suddenly went disasterously badly for us.

I explained to General Walls how the destruction of five bridges would put the road route to Espungabera out of commission for at least eighteen months and probably longer.

Certainly, there were tracks through the bush which could be used as diversions, but their use would not be feasible during the rainy season. And, because those alternate routes were merely dirt tracks, their transport would quickly deteriorate through the additional wear and tear factor, imposing an extra maintenance strain on their already thinly stretched resources. Those tracks too, by their very nature, were very vulnerable to ambushes and to the laying of landmines.

After studying the plan, General Walls gave me the go-ahead, telling me to put it before the Com-Ops Planning Staff for them to make the final decision as regards feasibility.

The Brigadier at Com-Ops was not at all happy that I had once again gone over his head to General Walls, but his Planning Staff assessed it in detail and gave us final authority to go ahead.



L10. Operation *Virile*. Map of flying column foray into Mozambique to destroy road bridges between Dombe and Espungabera: November/December, 1977.

I scheduled the operation to commence on Sunday, 20th November.

I ordered Major Bert Sachse to take overall command of the attack.

Captain Charlie Small, a Cambridge University trained engineer and formerly of the British Royal Engineers, was given the responsibility for blasting the bridges.

From information he gathered from air photographs, he was soon able to determine in advance, and with great accuracy, the precise quantity of explosives required to demolish each target.

The total figure was calculated at six tons . . . but in that august military body which had trained him as a young man, he had learned that an engineer should never make mistakes . . . so he doubled the quantity to twelve tons . . . as was their custom.

Now twelve tons was a lot of explosives . . . particularly military-type explosives which cost precious foreign exchange . . . but Charlie had heard on the grapevine that African Explosives Limited in Salisbury, had a large quantity of gelignite in stock which was nearing the expiry date after which it could not be sold, and, armed with this information, we purchased twelve tons at a third of the normal price.

Three Selous Scouts, all experts on demolitions, were nominated to assist Charlie Small in his work. They were Major Bert Sachse, the column commander himself, Lieutenant Chris Gough and Colour Sergeant Jim McGafferty.

Going along with the column was Pookie, an intriguing Rhodesian-designed mine-clearing vehicle fitted with sensors, enabling it to locate by electronic means, landmines buried in the road. Its equipment was built into a converted Volkswagen Beetle.

The mortar-troop, of the 10th-Battalion of the Rhodesia Regiment, was to be pre-positioned on the slopes of Mount Selinda inside Rhodesia, to lend support by mortaring Espungabera which was well within range. They were ordered to stay in position for the duration of the column's sojourn in Mozambique, to keep the FRELIMO garrison at Espungabera fully occupied.

Air support was to consist of two helicopters . . . one K-car, and one G-car – the latter for casavacs . . . two Hawker Hunter fighter bombers and two Lynx spotters.

The Hawker Hunters were tasked to be on call in case the column experienced difficulty on route.

According to intelligence reports the FRELIMO strength dug in around Espungabera, was estimated at being around four hundred men with artillery and mortar support.

In the first instance the plan called for the column to be broken down into three separate groups. First, was the advance guard commanded by Major John Murphy, who would stay a tactical bound ahead of the main force, to be commanded by the overall commander, Major Bert Sachse, while another American officer, Captain John Early, would take charge of the rearguard.

The column went into laager at the Selous Scouts' base at the Hot Springs Resort Hotel, which had been forced to close down due to terrorist activity.

On Saturday afternoon, the 19th November, I received an unexpected call from Com-Ops ordering our operation to be postponed. This concerned me gravely as the rainy season was teetering on the brink of starting and, as the roads around Espungabera area were of unsurfaced dirt, the column might easily get bogged down if the rains broke during the course of the operation.

The delay had been ordered because the Special Air Service and the Rhodesian Light Infantry were jointly launching an airborne attack . . . both helicopter and paratrooper . . . against the ZANLA base at Chimoio which, according to all reports, held a concentration of five thousand ZANLA terrorists, supported by Russian T-54 tanks . . . crewed by both ZANLA and FRELIMO.

Com-Ops were worried that if we went ahead with our attack, it might cause the terrorists to vacate their Chimoio camp or alternatively, put them and FRELIMO in a state of high alert which could put the attackers in real jeopardy. It was said that if we went in at the same time, it would spread the air support available for operations too sparingly, which was partly valid as the Rhodesian Air Force was thin enough on the ground already.

However, I added the counter-opinion, that in spite of the thinning of the air support, if the Selous Scouts attacked on schedule, it would complement rather than hinder the Chimoio raid, but Com-Ops held fast to the contrary point of view.

On Wednesday, 23rd November, the ambitious and well planned Chimoio attack went ahead, involving virtually all the Rhodesian Light Infantry, the whole of the Special Air Service . . . and, every aircraft the Rhodesian Air Force possessed . . . including some of the old Vampire Jets which were brought out of retirement for the occasion.

The troops did well and the operation was a marked success.

Afterwards, they re-emplaned and immediately flew north and launched straight into another attack, this time on the ZANLA base at Tembue, but perhaps because the Chimoio raid had alerted their occupants, the kill-rate was disappointing.

There was no doubt though, that even when the kills on external raids were numerically low, the mere threats of external raids kept the enemy in a perpetual state of jitters, raised their

desertion rate by staggering figures and threw their organisation into a state of perpetual administrative chaos.

Nevertheless, the enemy kills achieved during the course of these twin operations was in excess of twelve hundred . . . for the loss of one Rhodesian soldier.

In the Chimoio attack, a vast haul of interesting documents were recovered, one of which was of particular Selous Scout interest, because it was the ZANLA report, in typewritten form, on our attack on the Nyadzonya/Pungwe base in August, 1976, which is reproduced earlier.

While the attacks were in progress, it was, for a change, the turn of the Selous Scouts to sit twiddling their thumbs while other units saw all the action. Our pride took a temporary nose-dive until the Rhodesian Light Infantry and the Special Air Service returned from Tembue . . . when Com-Ops gave us the go on Espungabera.

Our slightly revised plan, brought about by the delay, was straight-forward and followed the broad lines of previous flying column operations we had launched into the Gaza Province.

The risks were high, not only because of the strong FRELIMO garrison at Espungabera, but also because there were many pocket-sized FRELIMO detachments based along the road we were taking, whose job it was to guard and keep the route open.

At Chimoio too, intelligence reports indicated that FRELIMO, at least, were in a high state of readiness because the Rhodesian Light Infantry and the Special Air Service had left them virtually untouched, concentrating their attentions purely on the ZANLA terrorists.

This meant their Russian-supplied T-54 tanks were intact, and ready to range out and maul us at will.

If, for instance, the FRELIMO at Espungabera launched a speedy follow-up and chased us up the road before we knocked out the first bridge over the Buzi, and the garrison at Chimoio got warning in time to move their armour south to intercept us, the column could find themselves trapped between two numerically more powerful forces and with no escape route available to get them back to Rhodesia.

For this reason, the plan involved blowing the Buzi River bridge north-east of Espungabera immediately after entry into Mozambique. Having achieved this, a powerful rearguard would be left in position to hold the escape route open while the column advanced at best possible speed to grab the northern-most bridge which crossed the Mabvudzi River, just south of Dombe . . . the approximate half-way point on the Espungabera to Chimoio road.

Once there, they would throw the advance guard north of the river to harass the FRELIMO at Dombe, while Captain Charlie Small and his demolition team got to work at the bridge.

Then, as soon as it was ready for blasting, the advance party would retire back across the bridge, which would then be demolished.

This tactic would be followed at each of the remaining three bridges in succession, the column cautiously retiring all the time to Rhodesia and safety.

I anticipated the whole operation taking no longer than two days.

To confound any ZANLA informers who might have been keeping an eye on us, the column left Hot Springs on the 26th November and moved to a Chipinga staging point, some sixty kilometres from the border. From there, at last light, they moved to a take-off point twelve kilometres from the border.

During the night, engineers cleared a passage through the minefield. Then, at first light with the Pookie mine detection vehicle leading the way with its tail up, the column gingerly picked its way through the cleared passage and took an old disused track for some twelve kilometres until it cut into the main road leading from Espungabera to Chimoio.

The condition of this track was unexpectedly bad . . . much worse than had been anticipated . . . so the column did not strike the main road until 10h00, which put them slightly behind schedule.

The Pookie too . . . robust landmine vehicle or not . . . soon gave up its mechanical ghost when faced with its first taste of Mozambique's roads . . . and spent the rest of the raid with its tail down, on tow behind one of the Unimogs.

During the course of this slow struggle to reach the main road, it was unexpectedly discovered that the column had gained some extra vehicles . . . two were tacked right on at the end . . . every vehicle in the column had been painted a uniform FRELIMO green, except for the two extras which were still dressed in Rhodesian camouflage.

On investigation, both were found to belong to the Rhodesian Army Service Corps. They had both been at the border staging post along with two African soldiers of the Army Service Corps, to top up the fuel tanks of the column vehicles from a bowser, which one of them was still towing.

Having finished their task, both soldiers . . . because they hadn't been properly briefed by their headquarters . . . and unnoticed by anyone in the column . . . tagged their vehicles on at the end.

Major Bert Sachse decided it was too late to send them back, so he allowed them to stay in spite of their Rhodesian camouflage. They became an asset to the column though, one of the soldiers fighting particularly well in a skirmish along route.

Having joined the main road, the advance-guard and main column went into defensive laager, while the rear-guard under Captain John Early and consisting of six vehicles, drove off to blast the first target . . . the bridge over the Buzi River, near Espungabera.

As they detached, we signalled the 10th-Battalion, the Rhodesia Regiment, manning their mortars on Mount Selinda, to commence stonking Espungabera to draw FRELIMO's attention away from the rapidly approaching rearguard.

As John's men came within sight of the bridge, the column too added their weight of mortar firepower.

The rear guard caught the FRELIMO bridge sentries completely by surprise and the vehicles . . . using all of their heavyweight firepower . . . drove pell-mell across the bridge, taking it without difficulty.

Those FRELIMO sentries who did not die in the first onslaught fled in the bush.

The Scouts deployed into defensive positions, the trucks withdrew to the northern bank and Captain John Early and Lieutenant Anthony White got to work laying the charges . . . during the course of which there was some desultory skirmishing with some of the braver FRELIMO survivors who had taken cover in the bush.

Just over half an hour later, John and Anthony had finished setting the charges and they, together with the bridge guards, withdrew to their vehicles.

The main column men waiting in laager to the north, grinned at each other on hearing the tremendous explosion and seeing the rising column of smoke indicating the Buzi Bridge was now little more than a memory . . . four bridges left to go.

Fifteen minutes later, the men of the rearguard deployed into defensive positions, to hold open the road the column had used to come in, and which they would have to use to make their exit, once the raid was over.

They waved their good-byes to the main body of the column, spear-headed by Major John Murphy and his Territorial Army *heavies* . . . who started engines and set off up the road leading towards Chimoio.

The planned intention had been for John Murphy, with a small advance party, to stay a tactical bound ahead of the main column to give early warnings of any opposition which might be encountered, but due to the generally bad condition of the road, which slowed the column's advance somewhat, this was not possible or adviseable, so the column rolled ahead as a single entity, its immense firepower ready to take on all-comers.

Leading the column was an African bus . . . a very creditable-looking African bus too . . . the roof-rack was piled high with luggage . . . with sacks of mealies . . . with rolls of old rusted chicken wire . . . with bundles of blankets . . . some old corrugated iron . . . all the usual stuff one would expect to see on top of a bus of its kind.

Captured during a previous raid, it had become a hobby piece for the Motor Transport Officer and his men, both regular and Territorial Army, who had almost re-made it.

The sides up to window height, and the floor, particularly over the wheel arches, had been strengthened and reinforced by the addition of two centimetre steel plate to deflect both the blast of landmines and small-arms fire, which was an indeed unusual service to be offered to passengers by any bus company.

To make the vehicle seem even more strange to the casual examiner, the luggage couldn't be removed from the roof. A section of the roof had been cut away to form a nest, and mounted there behind the cover of sacks, battered suitcases and rolls of chicken wire, was a Russian 12,7 millimetre heavy machinegun.

The gunner manning it, when he needed to open fire, merely pulled a release rope hanging by his right hand, which caused the complete roof rack to spring open in three sections.

The forward section hinged over to the front against a stop, to ensure it didn't obscure the view of the driver . . . while the rear sections hinged down, one to each side against stops, to prevent them obscuring the view of the passengers inside.

Another surprise for the unwary, was the two fifty calibre Brownings fitted in the rear of the bus, one pointing out to each side . . . camouflaged with old blankets . . . until they were needed.

The final unexpected difference concerned the passengers themselves . . . three European soldiers with blackened faces manned the main armaments and ten African Selous Scouts, commanded by Lieutenant Ben Botha, some wearing wigs so they appeared like women, armed with Russian RPD-light machineguns. A formidable bus indeed.

Immediately behind the bus followed two home-made West German armoured cars . . . the Pigs . . . each armed with twenty millimetre Hispano cannons.

Behind, followed Major John Murphy's command Unimog, equipped with death-dealing twin fifty calibre Brownings. Next in line of march were two infantry-carrying Unimogs, each mounting twin FN 7,62 medium automatic guns on the rear pointing forward, a single-mounted for forward firing by the front-seat passenger and two more singles, mounted one at each corner, on the back. This meant that each of the infantry-carrying Unimogs were mounting five FN 7,62 medium automatic guns, which gave them an exceptionally heavy firepower.

After them, in order of column, came another two Unimogs, each mounting in addition to the standard five MAG's as already outlined, an eighty one millimetre mortar and carrying two sixty millimetre mortars.

Behind them followed another infantry-carrying Unimog, Major Bert Sachse's command vehicle, mounting in addition to its complement of five FN 7,62 MAG's, a thirty seven millimetre SNEB, six-barrelled rocket launcher, designed so the tubes could be fired either individually or together as a battery.

The weapon . . . a small-fry Rhodesian Stalin's Organ . . . was incredibly easy to fire and fast to reload, and an ingenuous weapon indeed.

Its barrels were bored from solid aluminium rods fifty millimetres in diameter, and had been designed, manufactured and produced, rather diffidently for our use, by one of the Territorial Army Selous Scouts, who had done the whole job on his own in his small engineering business . . . which was a very creditable achievement.

After Bert Sachse's vehicle, followed another Unimog mounting a twenty millimetre cannon, whose position fluctuated from being directly behind Bert's, or as tail-end Charlie at the rear of the column.

The next was another infantry Unimog, mounting an eighty one millimetre mortar as well as its standard five FN 7,62 medium automatic guns.

Behind that came a captured Scania truck driven by Sergeant Mike Wilson, with Captain Charlie Small keeping him company in the front passenger seat. Its cargo – five tons of gelignite and pentolite.

Behind the Scania came Brutus the Berliet commanded by Lieutenant Chris Gough which, to save weight, had been stripped of guns and was loaded with another five ton mixed load of pentolite and gelignite.

Behind Chris was the final two tons of explosives on a four and a half ton Mercedes truck, commanded by Colour Sergeant Jim McGafferty.

The crews of these vehicles . . . and for that matter the other vehicles near them in the column . . .. could take cold comfort that neither the gelignite nor the pentolite was volatile . . . unless it was caught by a stray RPG-7 rocket!

Behind the explosive-carrying trucks, trailed the two trucks of the Rhodesian Army Service Corps, which shouldn't have been there in the first place, and bringing up the rear was the final Unimog, mounting a Russian 14,5 heavy machinegun.

Sergeant-Major Charlie Krause was the warrant officer in charge of all infantry on the column, other than those riding comfortably in the bus under Lieutenant Ben Botha's command.

In Rhodesia at a forward airfield, and eagerly waiting to take off and join any affray, was a section of two Hawker Hunter fighter-bombers. But they would stay put until Major Bert Sachse lost the benefit of surprise and called upon me to release them . . . for which I would first have to obtain Com-Ops' permission.

The column drove for thirteen kilometres before they had their first incident.

The first indication of trouble was when an RPG-7 rocket exploded on the road in front of the Scania explosive-carrying truck.

'I'll get that damned . . .' spluttered Sergeant Mike Wilson to Captain Charlie Small indignantly, concluding quite wrongly that somebody had accidentally discharged.

Then came the rattle of machinegun fire and he, along with everyone else in the column, put his foot down hard . . . realising suddenly he was in the killing ground of an ambush.

The luggage-laden roof-rack of Ben Botha's bus flapped back and all hell broke loose in the front of the column . . . which immediately deterred the ambushers.

Then, as planned, the bus pulled to the side of the road to allow the two Pigs to pass on ahead and neutralise the ambushers with their Hispano cannons, which they did expeditiously.

Once through the ambush area the column was reformed . . . they had suffered no casualties unless a good fright be counted – but Bert Sachse realised they had lost the benefit of surprise . . . FRELIMO were aware the column was in Mozambique and up to no good.

The bus, in spite of its heavy armament, was not a satisfactory lead vehicle once the element of surprise was lost, so it was tucked snugly into position immediately in front of Bert's command vehicle, where it stayed for the duration of the raid, while the Pigs joyfully ranged out ahead.

Now that things were out in the open, the Hawker Hunters were let off their long leash with Com-Ops' permission, and they screamed ahead of the column like wild dogs, savaging any vehicles which appeared on the road, or any likely looking ambushes seen in the process of formation.

The Hunter pilots, known for their overweening pride in their marksmanship, were deliberately disdainful of using too much ammunition on a target . . . plus a cannon shell cost twelve dollars a round . . . and on this operation they excelled themselves in economy.

On two occasions the column stopped to examine vehicles the Hunters had shot up, to find each time there was only one hole through the windscreen . . . on the driver's side . . . and that the vehicles, if the Scouts wanted them, were still driveable . . . naturally after first removing the bodies of the FRELIMO drivers.

At 14h30 that afternoon, the column reached the northern-most bridge over the Mabvudzi River, immediately south of Dombe.

The advance-guard under John Murphy drove over the bridge and rampaged to the outskirts of Dombe, putting down the little resistance they encountered.

From inside town itself they faced sterner stuff, but this soon ceased when the Hawker Hunters dropped down from the sky and systematically dealt with the FRELIMO strongholds.

Two FRELIMO prisoners were captured by John Murphy and afterwards taken back to Rhodesia for interrogation by Special Branch.

Down at the bridge . . . a high level construction of four spans . . . it took approximately two and a half hours for Charlie Small and his team of three helpers to lay their charges.

It was a bridge indeed that someone . . . probably many, in fact . . . had been very proud of . . . it was also the type of construction that any Army engineer would have licked his lips in anticipation at the chance of destroying. But then, engineers must be forgiven . . . for they are basically very destructive men at heart.

With Major John Murphy and his *heavies* glowering on the outskirts of Dombe, sending in the occasional deluge of mortar shells to show they still meant business, and with the Hawker Hunters fidgetting hopefully in the sky and ready to pick a fight at the drop of a hat, the FRELIMO resistance soon crumbled to nothing.

The braver ones recovered their courage after a while and some desultory return mortaring of the bridge area commenced from isolated pockets of FRELIMO, but it was largely inaccurate . . . and . . . Captain Charlie Small and his happy team of wreckers scarcely raised their heads from their work as the bombs haphazardly exploded in the general area.

Once the charges had been made ready, John Murphy withdrew back across the bridge with his men, and Charlie Small let it go.

The bridge went up with a tremendous roar of smoke and debris, and when this had cleared and the demolishers had returned to inspect their handiwork, it was seen the structure had collapsed into the river like a house of cards.

Exclamations of ribald glee came over the radio from the Hawker Hunter pilots over-flying the column, who'd had a grandstand view of the whole show.

Returning slowly towards the south, the column made it back to the Lusito River, just north of Gogoi, soon after darkness had fallen.

The forward elements of the column, commanded by John Murphy, continued on over the bridge and laagered on the southern bank, while the column commander, Major Bert Sachse, went into defensive positions on the northern bank with the rest.

This bridge was the largest structure of all their designated targets . . . six spans in all . . . a very creditable engineering feat which would take FRELIMO at least two years and many millions of escudos to replace . . . even had they the expertise, which they hadn't.

Captain Charlie Small, in tandem with Chris Gough, and Bert Sachse and Jim McGafferty working as another team, got down to work readying the bridge for destruction.

According to Charlie Small's calculations, he required three and a half tons of gelignite, spiced with pentolite, to do the job, which meant a considerable amount of physical work unloading the explosives from the Scania and manhandling it into position.

Four members of the FRELIMO Local Militia who had been taken prisoner on the road during the advance of the column . . . in the days of the Portuguese war they had been *mujibas* helping the FRELIMO terrorists, but were now uniformed in rough khaki, although not armed, and used by FRELIMO to keep discipline in the villages . . . were put to work helping.

Captain Charlie Small instructed the Scania truck be shoved by sheer muscle-power onto the bridge . . . it couldn't be driven as the engine noise would have alerted any FRELIMO sharpshooters out in the bush to its presence, and they would immediately have targeted it.

At twenty pace intervals the Scania was halted, and the requisite amount of explosives unloaded to cater both for the spans and for the piers on which they rested at those points . . . then it was all shoulders back to the wheel once more, so its dead weight could be inched on another twenty paces, when the whole process would again be repeated until the far end of the bridge on the southern bank was reached.

It was hot and heavy work and most of the men slogging there so back-breakingly, developed splitting headaches from the nitro fumes given off by the ageing . . . although it definitely wasn't sweating nitroglycerine . . . gelignite.

At 02h30, the team stopped working having done everything they could in the dark . . . it was impossible in the blackness of night to lower and lay charges at the base of the bridge piers, around which swirled the deep and fast flowing waters of the river.

After snatching a few short cat-naps, the teams were awake and back at work at first light until, at 09h00, everything had been readied to Charlie's meticulous satisfaction.

The men who had been guarding a perimeter on the northern bank withdrew to the south, and the whole column moved several kilometres away to safety.

'How do you feel being part of the demolition team that is about to blast the largest bridge ever destroyed by the Rhodesian Army?' Captain Charlie Small asked Lieutenant Chris Gough, just before he detonated.

The explosion was enormous, and when they went back to see if they had done the job sufficiently well, they saw that each of the six spans had been dropped and all the bridge piers had been totally disintegrated.

For a three hundred metre radius around the bridge, the bush had been flattened by the blast.

At 11h00 the column drew up at a large sawmill complex . . . which they had seen but not stopped at to examine as they hustled past on the forward journey . . . it lay at the eastern base of the Chimanimani Mountains.

The column took a certain amount of scattered fire as they drove in, but once they returned fire with all the guns at the column's disposal, FRELIMO resistance lessened considerably. To make sure, Major Bert Sachse ordered the mortar teams to pound any likely emplacements which they did, seeing FRELIMO soldiers running away afterwards.

A construction some six kilometres away on high ground was spotted . . . the FRELIMO always chose dominating positions for gun emplacements . . . which was mortared with a fair degree of accuracy, but continuing movement was seen although no return fire was directed at the column. Nevertheless, it was better to be safe than sorry, so I again asked Com-Ops for the release of the Hawker Hunters just in case . . . and . . . they soon devastated whatever it was with their rockets and cannons.

Many months afterwards it was discovered, to our embarrassment, that the *gun emplacement* had been the main radio relay station connecting the Transvaal to the Cabora Bassa Hydro Electric Scheme.

The sawmills were routinely set on fire and devastated, while three four and a half ton Mercedes trucks, one already laden with hardwood from the forests of Mozambique, were appropriated as spoils of war, and added to the column before it moved on again.

At 15h00, thirty kilometres past Gogoi, the column reached a road construction camp which had also been noticed, but not stopped at, on the way in . . . but now Bert Sachse and his men took time to look around.

It was packed with contruction vehicles . . . many of them really big monsters . . . which had all been supplied through the good offices of one of the United Nations' agencies to improve communications in Mozambique . . . which also, of course, would enable the ZANLA terrorists to get to our borders, from their camps, more expeditiously.

Bert called me up on the radio to tell me he had checked the camp and had found a total of seventeen five-ton tipper trucks, two monster D-8 bulldozers, three similar sized road graders, three CAT construction tractors and two road rollers, as well as a parts-store containing at least a quarter of a million dollars worth of spare parts.

The place was completely deserted . . . and . . . it was clear the Rhodesians had been expected.

Rhodesia, because of the grip of United Nations' sanctions and the consequent lack of foreign currency and by the war which was costing the country millions of dollars every week, found the procurement of this type of equipment very difficult.

The Rhodesian Roads Department, for instance, were making do with equipment which would often have been better suited as museum exhibits, rather than being still at work on the roads.

From a foreign exchange cost point of view, I was aware that one large tyre for a D-8 bulldozer might be priced in excess of three thousand dollars . . . and there was a huge pile in this road camp, just there for our taking.

Bert requested I ask the Rhodesian Engineers to helicopter in men capable of driving the stuff

back, together with an engineer to assess what was worth saving, and decide which could be driven out with the column.

Anything that was subject to break-down, Bert told me, would have to be destroyed as it would be too dangerous hanging around on route while repairs were made.

He mentioned, that a preliminary check had indicated that most of the equipment was unserviceable to a lesser or greater degree, although it was all virtually brand new. Some of them only had wheels off . . . some were parked with their bonnets open and some only had punctures . . . which confirmed that which we already knew – that FRELIMO certainly did not have the technical knowledge, or the degree of sophistication, to maintain or satisfactorily use equipment to best advantage, no matter how much of it was donated to them.

I agreed it was a good opportunity for Rhodesia and immediately telephoned Com-Ops to get the necessary clearance . . . but alas . . . Com-Ops were still walking in the clouds after the success of the Chimoio raid and were inclined to dismiss our raid as a side show and . . . the importance to the country of captured road equipment didn't dawn on them.

I had a heated altercation on the telephone trying to make them understand, but it was to no avail, and having received no satisfaction at all from a now really haughty Com-Ops, I called Bert back and reluctantly ordered him to go ahead with blasting all of those construction vehicles he couldn't bring out, by using the drivers he had with him.

I stressed it was vital the equipment not be left intact . . . for with it FRELIMO would be able to repair at least some of the damage we had caused. Then, shortly afterwards, having given it some thought, Com-Ops changed their minds and luckily, although Bert had ordered Captain Charlie Small to commence setting charges, none of them had been blown as Charlie had wanted to blast them all in one go.

An hour and a half later a heavy plant engineer, who knew his equipment, together with five Territorial Army members of the Plant Troop of the Rhodesian Engineers on call-up, and relatively elderly at that, arrived by helicopter and were dropped off at the road camp.

As some of these grey-haired . . . some of them rotund . . . gentlemen deplaned, one Selous Scout turned and looked disbelievingly at his mate.

'My God,' he said in awe, 'who are those guys . . . *Salusa* Scouts!'

There was, in Rhodesia, a patent pep-me-up mixture for middle aged men, trade-named *Salusa 45* . . . and this pun soon swept the length and breadth of Rhodesia.

The Plant Troop men walked around examining the equipment, their lips almost slavering, for all of them were in the heavy equipment and plant business as civilians, and some even owned companies and their own plant . . . and . . . the stuff they were looking at was something they had dreamed of handling or owning for years.

'The spare parts alone,' one of them said, 'makes me think of Aladdin's cave!'

But Major Bert Sachse was not sentimental . . . and he couldn't have afforded the time even had he been . . . and he'd decided that, for a start, the big D-8 bulldozers couldn't be taken along because they were too slow – they had to be destroyed.

'No,' said the Plant Troop men in horror. 'Please, Major . . . you just don't know what this stuff's worth . . .'

Bert Sachse ordered that the only vehicles he would allow to join the column were three large road graders and one tipper truck . . . which, astonishingly, were the only items immediately serviceable.

The Plant Troop drivers begged for permission to get to work on the rest with spanners and wrenches.

'But, Sir . . . I can fix that one in twenty minutes . . .'

'All that one needs, Sir, is for its wheel to be changed . . .'

But Bert hardened his heart to their pleas and ordered Captain Charlie Small to get back to work, laying charges on all the equipment and stores which Charlie put . . . as a matter of pride . . . into a single cordex ring-main, one and a half kilometres long.

When everyone had withdrawn to a safe distance . . . and, ignoring the glum looks of the

Salusa Scouts . . . Charlie Small personally administered the *coup de grace* with a flourish, and blasted everything in one gigantic explosion.

Nearby this camp was another bridge . . . one which had clearly only just been constructed . . . and this too was neatly dropped into the river by Charlie with another of his explosive sleight of hand tricks.

Further along, on a new stretch of road still under construction, charges were laid on a large concrete culvert which was impossible to completely destroy in the short time available, due to its solid construction, but once it had been weakened, Charlie said it would be washed away by the first heavy rains of the forthcoming rainy season.

The column which had expanded rapidly in size, as it gobbled up extra FRELIMO vehicles captured on route, now stretched over a distance of some five kilometres which made it considerably more vulnerable than it had been on the way in, particularly with FRELIMO well alerted. So the Hawker Hunters . . . I'd had to fight Com-Ops to get them released this time . . . they said we'd used up too much valuable ammunition already . . . prowled constantly and edgily overhead and ahead of the column, paternalistically looking after the Scouts and continually blasting any vehicles or anything else likely to prove harmful.

On another section of the newly constructed road, eleven kilometres past the road camp they had devastated, more construction equipment, consisting of four earth-movers and two bull-dozers were found . . . of which three were added to the ranks of the column.

It was at this time that the column suffered its first and only casualty of the raid . . . which occurred when a Scout fired a 94-Energa rifle grenade at a compressor trailer to wreck it. In the subsequent blast a grenade splinter ricocheted back and badly wounded the firer, necessitating a helicopter casavac.

The final bridge to be demolished had three spans which, after being set about with explosive charges by Charlie and his team of helpers, was dropped in the same neat fashion that the admiring column soldiers had come to expect.

Major Bert Sachse, knowing that no matter what occurred, the raid would still be investigated and only the views totally detrimental to Rhodesia considered, scattered a quantity of unused Russian and British explosives in the area of the smitten bridge, after having carefully collected up all traces which indicated that Rhodesian manufactured explosives had been used, as he had a mind to give the United Nations' investigators something to think about.

Late in the afternoon they reached the final turnoff and joined up once again with Captain John Early's rearguard . . . who had been bored almost to tears for the duration of the raid and had virtually nothing to report . . . for the FRELIMO at Espungabera, even though numerically strong, had decided to leave the Rhodesians well alone . . . particularly too, when every time they moved their heads they got a stonking from the mortars of 10-Rhodesia Regiment up on Mount Selinda.

Having joined up, the column retired along the bush road on the final stretch back to Rhodesia, losing one grader on the way which broke down, and had to be blown up.

A further earth-mover got stuck in a ravine and was abandoned three kilometres inside Mozambique . . . which, the Rhodesian Engineers returned to the next day, repaired and drove back to Rhodesia.

Salusa Scouts or not . . . they were determined not to leave it behind . . . particularly after the *Phillistines* . . . the Selous Scouts . . . had reduced the rest to twisted scrap.

When darkness fell on the night of the 29th of November, they were still just inside Mozambique, so they laagered up for the night. Then, the next morning they got under way and without any further difficulties, crossed the border back into Rhodesia at 10h00 on the 30th of November.

Once there, they based up at Hot Springs, where the vehicles were unloaded, washed down and the guns cleaned and oiled.

After everything had been reloaded back into the vehicles . . . Brutus the Berliet, now carrying all the column's spare ammunition . . . they set off back for Salisbury as soon as it was dark.

A short way down the road a report came over the radio that one of the vehicles had caught fire.

The column pulled to the side of the road and the men reached for the, generally small, fire extinguishers in the vehicle cabs . . . but almost immediately some of the vehicles hurriedly re-started engines and moved off frantically.

Mike Kerr, wondering what was going on, looked back and saw that Brutus was a sheet of flame . . . the tarpaulin covering its cargo was ablaze and burning furiously.

Mike didn't realise what its deadly cargo was until Charlie Krause, his face as white as a sheet, jumped on the running board and told him to get away as fast as he could – which Mike did without further prompting.

Seven kilometres further up the road the column stopped and reformed, the night sky behind them ablaze and lit up with some incredibly spectacular . . . and very expensive . . . fireworks.

All around reports began to come in over the radio that some poor chap . . . was getting one of the biggest *revs* ever seen in the area.

Before leaving Mozambique, Bert Sachse had ordered the release of the FRELIMO Militia prisoners who had made themselves so useful helping with the carrying and laying of gelignite on the bridges before demolitions were carried out . . . all of them expressed sorrow at leaving the Rhodesians and begged to be taken back to Rhodesia, as Mozambique, under FRELIMO rule, was no longer a good place to live.

As a result of this raid, Espungabera was put into a worse communication situation than hard-hit Malvernia in the Gaza Province. But at least the countryside around Malvernia was flat and featureless, so it wasn't difficult there, by means of mine-clearing parties checking roads daily, for the enemy to still get some convoys through.

Espungabera, however, now the road bridges had been destroyed, was totally cut off from the main FRELIMO and ZANLA base at Chimoio by a number of fast flowing rivers which flowed throughout the year . . . and the garrison was consequently denied all means of support, except for what could be brought in on the heads of porters.

During the raid, Radio Intercept Services had picked up numerous frantic messages being passed between Espungabera and Chimoio, but the Chimoio people . . . even though their armour was unscratched and pristinely ready to go . . . had troubles of their own and their nerves were still shattered by the devastating effects of the Rhodesian Light Infantry and the Special Air Service attack and they were apparently unwilling, at that time, to take on anyone else's scraps or quarrels.

Major Bert Sachse . . . in accordance with the plan . . . left two separate parties, each of six Selous Scouts, behind in Mozambique, to operate on foot and to observe and report on enemy reactions during the ten days following the raid.

They had an interesting time, seeing all types of vehicles, which FRELIMO had hidden to keep out of the hands of the Rhodesian depredators, suddenly reappear, and commence being used to shuttle supplies between the various demolished bridges.

Having watched this for a time, the Selous Scouts' teams commenced stopping vehicles and destroying them.

The stay-behind-teams had the facility to call for Hawker Hunter support if they required it, and they called in numerous strikes against vehicles they couldn't reach themselves, and it was not long before FRELIMO were reduced to doing what we had originally intended they be brought down to – moving everything by foot.

These stay-behind-teams discovered a most surprising attitude prevalent amongst the tribesmen in the area around Espungabera.

They were not at all dismayed or put out by the Selous Scout operations . . . on the contrary, they were delighted . . . spending much time bringing unsolicited food and delicacies to the Selous Scouts.

They told of the unpopularity of FRELIMO and the brutalities they subjected the locals to. Whereas, they reasoned, although the Portuguese in their several hundreds of years of neglect in

Mozambique, had done little or nothing for the simple tribesmen in the bush, they had at least left them alone . . . while the FRELIMO had more than soured everyone.

The patrols were continually asked to give the people medical attention which they did, with what little medical supplies they had, and it was not long before people started trekking in to see them with all sorts of ailments, begging for treatment. There had been no doctors or medical treatment available to them since the Portuguese had pulled out in 1974.

Almost unbelievably . . . considering the Selous Scouts were all white men . . . no one reported their presence to FRELIMO . . . and all the Selous Scouts came up against was friendship, help and assistance.

It was clear beyond argument that the tribespeople in that area were over-ripe for counter-revolution against the FRELIMO, who had taken over the oppressor role once played by the Portuguese and, if such had been the Selous Scouts' brief, there was no doubt in my mind, that the area held rich ground to seed and cultivate . . . something we should have attended to years before . . . then, FRELIMO would have been too busy sorting out their own problems to have taken on ZANLA's too.

It was a pity too we were refused permission to cross into Mozambique at the same time that the Rhodesian Light Infantry and Special Air Service attacked Chimoio.

We heard that once the attack had gone in, ZANLA survivors had fled in trucks, cars, on bicycles . . . anything they could lay their hands on . . . south from Chimoio along the road to Espungabera in an effort to escape to safety. If we had been advancing north along that road at the time, we could easily have doubled the already high score achieved by the *Saints* and the *Supers*.

Besides all that, *Virile* was still a highly successful operation which we had brought off without suffering a single casualty caused by the enemy, in spite of the high risk factors inherent with the plan. Once again we had correctly interpreted the likely reactions of the enemy.

Until that stage of the war, it was the largest demolition operation carried out by Rhodesian Forces.

Having effectively been denied Espungabera as a launch point, ZANLA were left with little option but to move north and use the only remaining roads left open to them . . . which exactly fitted our suggested strategy of funneling them across our border at Mtoko and Umtali where, there is no doubt, the Fireforces would quickly have regained the upper hand for us – if our suggestions had been followed to their logical conclusion, which, unfortunately, they weren't.

The Barragem/Malvernia railway line was a total wreck, and the Special Air Service had carried out some exceptionally good road ambushes in that area.

It had been our suggested plan for a follow-up that, having blown the bridges, the roads between would be kept dangerous to use, by the work of a number of small stay-behind parties, rotated on a continuous basis, who would lay mines and set ambushes.

Regrettably, for reasons best known to Com-Ops who were supposed to arrange for the supply of the additional personnel to handle this, from other than Selous Scout sources, it wasn't done. Consequently, the FRELIMO at Espungabera managed to get enough supply convoys through for ZANLA, using a route to the east, a bad road apparently, but still usable even though with difficulty.

There was, by then, no restrictions remaining on the use of air power against these convoys which, of course, was the ideal weapon to use against them. This would have reduced the ZANLA terrorists to moving only at night through the Mozambique bush and, if the pressure had been maintained, this would have produced a marked effect in our favour in the south-eastern and the eastern operational areas.

It would too, have been a tremendous blow to terrorist morale.

'. . . if this is what we get outside Rhodesia . . . what will it be like once we are in? . . .'

FRELIMO had already reached the stage where they were having the greatest of difficulty keeping Malvernia resupplied, and for a while it seemed they might even have to consider abandoning Malvernia and moving their garrison back to Barragem.

Espungabera, the main terrorist incursion route to the south east of Rhodesia, was now in the same position . . . all that was required again was a *sustained* effort against the bush secondary roads.

However, it was not done and the final straw came a few months later when we discovered by air reconnaissance that the bridge we had blown to the north of Gogoi, was being negotiated by ferry-boat.

I immediately applied to Com-Ops, asking for the ferry to be taken out by an airstrike, but my request was turned down flat to my considerable perplexity.

I enquired the reason and was told, there was no *proof* to show it was being used by ZANLA terrorists . . . it was probable, they added airily, that only FRELIMO were using it. The stark reality became, that because of Com-Ops' inaction and dithering in this and other areas, the ZANLA terrorist organization regained unrestricted, although perhaps slower, use of the road as an infiltration route into Rhodesia, which nullified our destruction of the bridges, and brought to nothing the high risks our men had exposed themselves to.

Eventually, after some months, when the evidence had been repeated sufficiently to satisfy the desk-bound strategists at Com-Ops, that the ZANLA terrorists had markedly increased their strengths in the operational areas adjacent to Espungabera, they reluctantly ordered the Air Force to destroy the ferry boat.

A Hawker Hunter did the job . . . and very expeditiously too . . . making only one lazy pass, during which time it blasted the craft into a wreck of metal and wood. Regrettably though, for Rhodesia and the Rhodesians, the damage had already been done, and hundreds of terrorists had already trodden its boards on their way to kill and murder in the Rhodesian south-east.

Inexplicable Com-Ops' decisions such as this, still leave me pondering what the reasons were which prompted them.

A footnote to this raid came some months afterwards when I was called to Army Headquarters, by a Colonel of the Staff not in the know regarding Selous Scout operations, and shown a bill from a large multi-national company, demanding six million dollars from the Rhodesian Government for the destruction or confiscation of certain heavy earth-moving equipment by the Selous Scouts.

With my tongue held firmly in my cheek, I solemnly professed astonishment and shook my head . . . no . . . I had no idea at all what they were talking about.

I never learned the final result, but certainly until the end of the war at least, I retained for Selous Scouts' use, a mint-condition heavy-duty Caterpillar grader to maintain the roads at the Andre Rabie Barracks.

PART 7

The Beginning of the End
1978

Operation Turmoil: Attack on Kavalamanja Zipra Staging Post: February/March, 1978
It first came to light in August, 1976, when Special Branch heard a ZIPRA camp was to be found sixteen kilometres west of Feira in Zambia. It was said to hold two hundred ZIPRA terrorists, thirty Zambian soldiers and two Chinese instructors.

Then, nothing more was heard of it for a long time, which was not unusual, for terrorist camps were used and disused with great frequency, plus a lot of them we heard whispers of, had never existed in the first place. Intelligence gathering can often be a frustrating task.

After some months a few mentions of a camp at Kavalamanja began to creep into the interrogation reports of captures, but nothing definite . . . no one was questioned who had actually been there . . . the name of the camp was variously given as Geneva, Kanyemba and Feira Base.

Nevertheless, as a matter of routine, an air photographic reconnaissance was run over the village of Kavalamanja . . . but the verdict of the photographic interpreters was negative . . . there were indications only of normal tribal village life . . . no grass *bashas* and no temporary encampment.

Just to be sure, a Special Air Service reconnaissance team was sent in to carry out observations of the area from the 29th of June, to the 2nd of July, 1977, but although they reported seeing a lot of Zambian Army personnel, their conclusions were: *No indication of terrorist habitation, although they could pass through.*

Radio Intercept Services, came up with the next mention . . . a month later in August, 1977, nine *freedom fighters* had been arrested and detained at Feira for shooting at and ill-treating the local people at Kavalamanja.

This information was reinforced on the 9th of September, 1977, when another radio intercept indicated that the locals at Kavalamanja were asking the authorities to move the ZIPRA people away from them, because they were causing a lot of trouble.

So, in spite of a negative report by the Air Force and by the Special Air Service, a terrorist camp was there . . . but so were a lot of other camps and some required more ugent attention . . . Kavalamanja would just have to wait in the queue!

On the 6th of February, 1978, a radio intercept from the radio address of *Digence, Feira,* to *Provigence Lusaka,* was picked up which suddenly put Kavalamanja at the top of the list for Security Force attention:

About one hundred and fifty freedom fighters (ZAPU) based at Kavalamanja camp have been without food since 29th January, 1978. Due to having no food the offensive exercises across the enemy territory have been suspended. Cadres are currently feeding on fish. Report to follow.

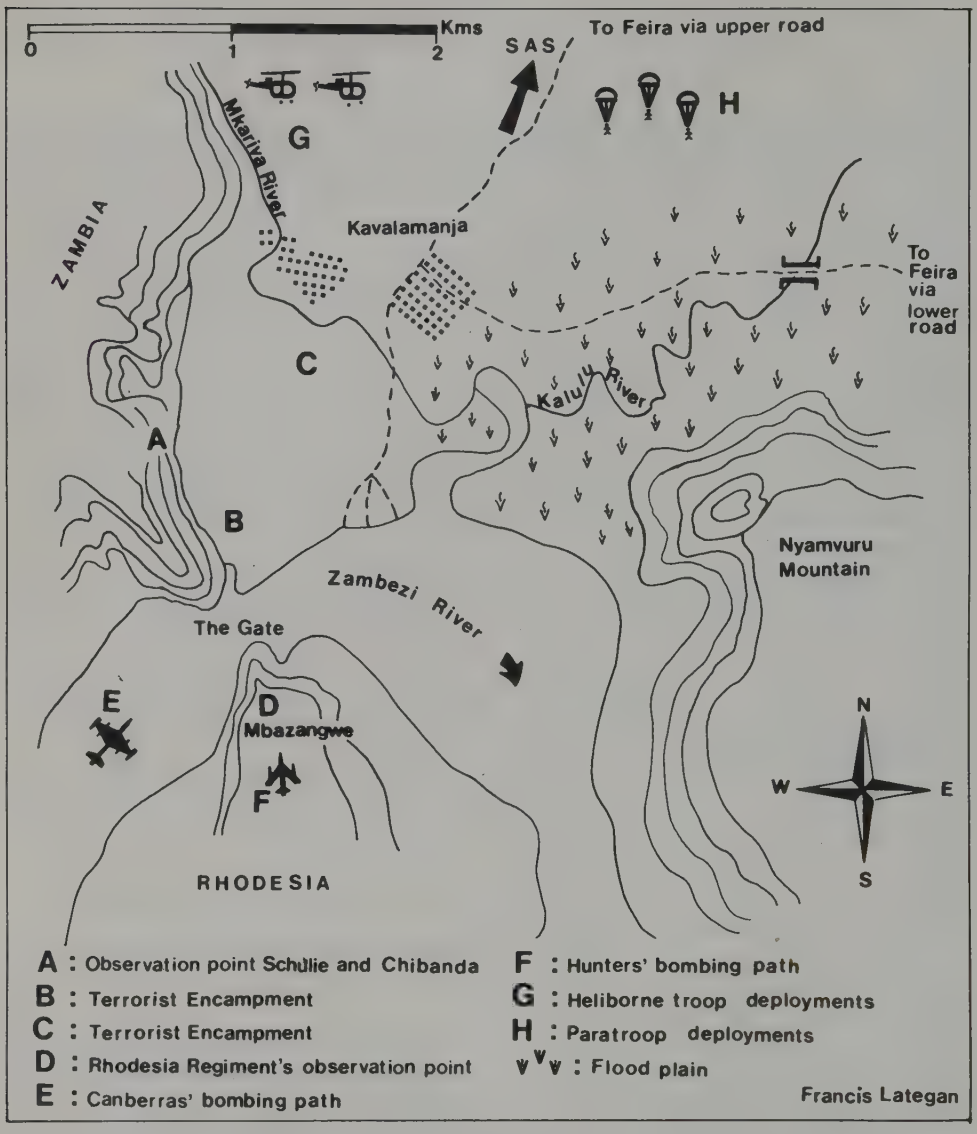
As a first move, a platoon of Territorial Army soldiers were put into position to carry out observations from a point on the Rhodesian side of the Zambezi opposite Kavalamanja, known as *the gate,* where the river flow narrowed between the granite outcrops of two hill features.

Their observations indicated the current presence of ZIPRA terrorists without doubt.

. . . 17h00 15 C/T's (communist terrorists) sited at gate and moving upstream in SE direction . . . all carrying packs, dressed in khaki to olive green and carrying AK's . . . 10h40 3 C/T's . . . 13h00 13 C/T's . . . 14h40 17 C/T's . . . 14h45 3 C/T's . . . 15h10 6 C/T's . . . 16h00 2 C/T's . . . 17h20 4 C/T's . . .

While they were at this observation point a Rhodesia Regiment platoon, deployed on ambush further upstream, surprised a ZIPRA group crossing the Zambezi and opened fire.

Shortly after the sounds of the contact had died away, the remnants of this group . . . some floating dead in the water and some still alive in inflated boats . . . drifted past the observation point at *the gate* so they opened fire to finish them off.



L11. Operational *Turmoil*. Map of attack on Kavalamanja ZIPRA staging post: February/March, 1978.

The ZIPRA terrorists at Kavalamanja immediately opened return fire with mortars and heavy machineguns and a hot mini-battle was soon under way . . . which only ceased when a Hawker Hunter was called in to put out the enemy firing positions . . . which it did successfully and with great promptitude.

Now there was trouble . . . the Territorials shouldn't have opened fire and compromised

themselves . . . but the damage was done . . . the point was, would the terrorists now vacate the base?

An aerial photographic reconnaissance would have been useful at this stage, but unfortunately the weather did not allow it.

On the 1st of March, Schulie and Sergeant Chibanda were deployed by helicopter into the mountainous country to the west of Kavalamanja . . . and twenty four hours later after experiencing a nasty scare from a very grumpy rhinoceros who resented the intrusion of the Scouts into his remote domain and tried to run them down . . . they got into position on a high mountainous ridge to the west and immediately overlooking Kavalamanja village.

After settling in they found they had a good view of the village area which was spread out panoramically below them. To their right hand side . . . the south . . . flowed the turgid waters of the mighty Zambezi River . . . its waters spread wide after escaping the restricting confines of the Mapata Gorge narrows, where the swift and racing currents made crossings too hazardous, except for the most skilled of native boatmen.

The Zambezi, where it flowed past Kavalamanja, was wide anyway, but at this time of the year it was even wider than normal . . . some eight hundred metres at least . . . because the summer rains had been heavy and three flood-gates, upstream at the Kariba Dam, had been opened which had heightened the flood.

For the same reason the low-lying flood-plain . . . several hundred metres wide and following the course of the Kalulu River at the base of the hills to the east of Kavalamanja, was flooded to the depth of a metre, covering the bridge and cutting the lower dirt road leading east to Feira . . . which followed for part of the way, the course of the Zambezi.

Heading away northwards was the upper road which led some distance inland before turning east and going on to Feira which, as the crow flies, was not far, but by the circuituous route skirting the mountain, it was a long way indeed.

The team's first task was to identify and fix the position of each camp and sub-camp, ascertain the number and status of the occupants in each and try to fix the exact location of the terrorist headquarters.

They were also tasked to check out an element of the Zambian Army reported to be in the area, which was said to be equipped with anti-aircraft weapons, as was the ZIPRA base.

The Air Force, for obvious reasons, had a keen interest in the team identifying the anti-aircraft weapon-types and fixing the position of their emplacements, so they could give them individual attention in the first moments of the air strike mounted before the ground forces went in.

Once in position, the team set up a powerful telescope through which they observed the goings on below them.

This was the Rhodesian Army which, by force of circumstances, had to work on a shoestring budget, so there was no magnificent camera with a telephoto lense available for use . . . so Schulie improvised and took photographs by clamping an ordinary camera to the telescope to get close-ups of the terrorist camps.

The camp complexes were on the outskirts of the Zambian settlement, as was usual, the headquarters element being to the west of the village and the main terrorist base to the east, but each of the main bases were dispersed into smaller camps.

Soon staccato coded morse messages began to stutter intermittently in from the team, and ZIPRA strengths and positions began to show on an air photograph in the operations room.

'Camp number one . . . eighty five Charlie Tangos (communist terrorists) counted.

Camp numbers five and six . . . two-zero and two-one.

Camp number four . . . two-eight terrorists.

Camp number two . . . four terrs . . . repeat four . . . anti-aircraft guns, calibre one-four point fives and one - two point sevens positioned at . . .

State of readiness . . . fairly vigilant . . . weapons carried by personnel at all times . . . but . . . most of them seem to be walking around with their boots unlaced.'

No trenches or other defence works were noticed ... most of the terrorists were carrying AK's, some with the brown bakelite magazines which the guerillas liked taping into pairs for quick reloading.

The majority of the uniforms worn were olive green in colour, sometimes mixed with items of communist East German kit.

Headgear varied between caps, hats and berets – with a particular bright green cap being very prominent.

After they had settled in, Schulie moved and positioned himself on the opposite side of the camp area to his half-section, in order to gain a multi-dimensional view of the target area.

The Zambian Army's base was sited ten kilometres away from the ZIPRA complex. The reconnaissance team counted fifty Zambian soldiers ... all of whom were busily engaged in digging defensive trenchworks around their camp, which dominated the northern route from Kavalamanja to Feira.

Gradually Security Force ideas on how the complex should be attacked began crystallising as the cryptic morse code messages of Schulie and Chibanda confirmed, added to, reduced or denied the intelligence already gleaned.

Troops allocated for the attack were two commandos of the Rhodesian Light Infantry, one company of the Rhodesian African Rifles and the Special Air Service.

Schulie and Chibanda, in their crow's nest position, would switch to the same radio frequency as the assault force when it came in, and keep them posted on the enemy's reaction.

The Zambezi to the south and the flood-plain of the Kalulu River to the east, theoretically at least, formed natural obstacles against which the Security Forces could box the enemy in, if they landed to the north and to the west and then swept down to the river.

The Special Air Service were tasked to drop well north of Kavalamanja, with anti-tank weapons, to block the main upper road to Feira to guard against the possibility of interference by the Zambian Army.

The attack would be initiated by Hawker Hunters, which would come in from the south across the river, and neutralise all the anti-aircraft positions plotted by Schulie and Chibanda.

The Canberras would come in at low-level from the south-west along the course of the Zambezi, and put in their baskets of bouncing Alpha bombs for the ZIPRA terrorists to play with. Behind the Canberras would come the paratroop Dakotas, simultaneous with the troop-carrying helicopters which would sweep in at low-level across the flooded waters of the Zambezi River.

The heliborne troops would be put down to the west, while the paratroopers would be dropped in the north-east.

The lessons of hard experience had taught us that only seconds must be allowed to split the time of the air strike and the paratrooper drop and the helicopter run-in of the ground troops. Delay in deployment invariably meant the enemy took off and escaped into the surrounding bush.

The distance from the target areas of the dropping zones was crucial. If the men were dropped too far out, yawning gaps would develop in the sweep line as a consequence, but if they were dropped too close in, the enemy would escape encirclement before the troops had shaken themselves out.

The attack was first scheduled for 08h00 on Sunday the 6th of March, but was delayed for two hours, until 10h00, because the weather closed in with heavy driving rain.

Once the troops were in and established, sweeps towards the centre of the complex commenced.

The ground commander had meanwhile been put down on high ground overlooking the camp from where he would direct operations. Two majors stayed aloft in fixed-wing aircraft to direct air strikes onto any stubborn pockets of resistance encountered, and to provide liaison between the ground commander and the troops on the ground.

Unfortunately, the dense jessie bush covering the area was thicker than had been anticipated

and it slowed the progress disasterously, throwing out the timings. Consquently, the troops only reached the terrorist base area by late afternoon which precluded a sweep of the camps being completed by nightfall.

The sweep was completed the next morning, but it was reasonable to assume that most of the terrorists had escaped across the flood-plain which would not have been much of an obstacle after dark and which hadn't been covered by stop-groups.

The Special Air Service's part in the operation had gone according to plan and, other than containing the Zambian Army, they also destroyed a large ZIPRA arms and ammunition dump which had, presumably for reasons of security, been sited well away from the ZIPRA base at Kavalamanja.

The tabulated results were forty two ZIPRA terrorists killed . . . as well as the camps' reserve ammunition holding and a number of vehicles destroyed.

Some radio intercepts, to the grim amusement of the Rhodesians, indicated that the Zambian Army personnel based at Feira, were firmly convinced it was their turn to be attacked next . . . and were hysterically calling for help from Lusaka.

Army Headquarters at Lusaka, however, expressed no interest in their plight and left them strictly alone, to fight it out with the Rhodesians, should it become necessary.

Schulie and Chibanda stayed on after the ground forces were withdrawn to check if there was any re-grouping by ZIPRA survivors . . . and if there was . . . to guide air strikes in onto them.

They stayed at their observation point for an additional two days seeing only a total of six ZIPRA terrorists during the whole time . . . two who came out of hiding places in trees growing on the flood-plain and who hurried away as fast as they could, and four who sneaked out of the bushes, rooted around for any kit which had been overlooked by the Security forces and not destroyed and, then left.

During the morning of Wednesday, 9th March, a foot patrol of eight Zambian soldiers approached along the main road from the north . . . foraged around for a while and then left following the lower road to Feira along the river.

The day after, Schulie and Chibanda, satisfied that no re-organisational regrouping of ZIPRA was apparent, used the cover of rain to withdraw to a pick-up point from where they were uplifted by helicopter and flown back to Rhodesia.

Selous Scouts Look after their Own – But at very Heavy Cost: February, 1978

In November, 1976, we had received bad news . . . Corporal Burundu who had been with the Regiment since its inception, had been kidnapped by terrorists while on leave at his home village in the Nyajena Tribal Trust Land near Fort Victoria.

Now kidnapping by terrorists of African members of the Rhodesian Security Forces while on leave, was an ever-present danger they all faced. It was the classic civil war situation of who was friend and who was foe. Was your brother on the same side as you? Who did your cousin support?

For Burundu it was to be even more tragic as, unbeknown to him, his father had become a rampant ZANLA supporter . . . and he handed his own son, presumably to be eventually done to death for he was never found alive even after the war, over to the local ZANLA terrorist group.

We heard all this and so did Special Branch, as every effort was made to find our man. We sent in pseudo callsigns and the Rhodesian African Rifles sent in men too, but we found nothing. Only the unconfirmed story that the terrorists had walked him . . . artificial leg and all . . . to Mozambique as a prisoner.

Finally, we left it alone . . . we could do nothing else as the trail was cold.

Then, over a year later someone came to my office.

'Sir,' said Sergeant Major Takawira, 'Burundu's brother (who was also a Selous Scout) has heard from his father at the Nyajena.'

'Oh, yes,' I said immediately interested. 'What's his story?'

'He says he doesn't ever want to see him at home again.'

I breathed an expletive, more readily associated with a child rather than a father.

'But why I have come to see you, Sir,' said Sergeant Major Takawira, 'is because the people of Burundu's village . . . particularly his father and mother, are treating his wife who is still there, very badly. Couldn't we send some men to pick her up and bring her back to the Andre Rabie Barracks?'

'Yes,' I said immediately.

It will be remembered that we had made a practice of uplifting the families of African Scouts – particularly turned terrorists – from tribal areas and taking them back to Inkomo if they were in danger, so the request was, in fact, a fairly routine one.

It was normal to send a stick of armed men in one vehicle to do the uplift. In this case, however, I decided to do better than that. The Nyajena Tribal Trust Land was an area which had been badly subverted by ZANLA and I felt unaccountably uneasy.

I detailed a stick of European Territorial soldiers, experienced column soldiers, to go with Sergeant Takawira to collect Burundu's wife, ensuring as was routine, that they rehearsed anti-ambush drills before leaving. Altogether some twelve men left Inkomo on the 4th of February, 1978, and, to make sure they were sufficiently strong to deal with any opposition encountered, I gave them two of my precious column vehicles, one armed with a fifty calibre Browning and the other with twin 7,62 medium automatic guns, along with the usual troop carrier for the uplift.

After spending the night of the 4th in Fort Victoria and after being briefed on the local situation there by Major Bert Sachse, the mini-column set out for the Nyajena, arriving at Burundu's village at 14h00 on the 5th. They picked up Burundu's wife, who had indeed been badly treated, and left some quarter of an hour later to return to Fort Victoria. Unfortunately, there was only one road to the village, so consequently they were forced to use the same road on the return trip . . . which is normally avoided in case of ambush.

At 16h10 they ran into a well sited ZANLA ambush and all vehicles were caught in the cross-fire, particularly the heavily armed column vehicles. In a matter of a few seconds all the damage was done, and within a minute the ambushers got to their feet and ran.

Sergeant Major Takawira called me on the radio. We had suffered grievous casualties losing four men dead . . . Lance Corporal Richard Cook, Trooper John Whitfield and two African Selous Scouts. Another Scout, Trooper Keith Moss, son of Basil Moss, was desperately wounded.

Bert Sachse, after I had relayed Sergeant Major Takawira's report, sent in a Fireforce to restore the scene and casevac Keith Moss, but tragically, he died en route to hospital.

The losses were severely felt by the Regiment.

Helicopter Shortage

The Rhodesian war machine, minuscule by world standards, was by the beginning of 1978 stretched to its full limit, and Com-Ops, although alive to the pressure points, could do very little to bring the internal situation back under satisfactory Security Force control.

To fight the terrorists effectively, whether internally or externally, we needed more air power, particularly helicopters.

Due to the small numbers we possessed, any major attack on an external base meant that the internal scene was denuded of helicopters and consequently their Fireforce passengers, for periods of up to ten days at a time and, without the Fireforces around, the kill rates dropped back to almost zero and the influence of the terrorist increased.

An additional burden, was when external targets were being checked out by our reconnaissance teams, as a *hot extraction* facility always had to be provided for them, which meant a helicopter being put on standby exclusively for their use.

This also meant that Fireforces suffered badly by the loss.

Eventually, it was the reconnaissance teams, lead by Schulie, who were all well aware of the

situation, who suggested they carry out their external tasks without the benefit of direct helicopter support.

To replace *hot extraction,* they suggested that fighter aircraft be immediately despatched to their positions, if they got into trouble, to confuse the enemy and break-up any attack or follow-up.

It was a very brave suggestion from very brave men, yet, as much as I disliked the idea I went along with it, because I knew the country needed those helicopters . . . until such time as the helicopter position improved.

Captain Chris Schollenberg, Grand Cross of Valour, Silver Cross of Rhodesia

A Selous Scout, Second Lieutenant Dale Collett, was the first Rhodesian soldier to win the Silver Cross of Rhodesia, the second highest award for gallantry in the Rhodesian Security Forces.

The Selous Scouts were to score another first when Schulie was awarded the Grand Cross of Valour, Rhodesia's highest award for bravery, the equivalent of the Victoria Cross, or the Congressional Medal of Honour.

Much discussion had taken place in the messes of the Rhodesian Army as to who would be the first to win it. Opinion had generally conceded the first recipient would be very, very, brave but also . . . very, very, dead.

Schulie was without doubt the foremost exponent of reconnaissance in the Rhodesian Army . . . perhaps in the world . . . and the techniques he had developed had enabled the Selous Scouts' Reconnaissance Troop to carry out incredibly detailed reconnaissances of targets deep inside Zambia and Mozambique.

The two man reconnaissance concept, which I had initially viewed with the utmost doubt and concern, had proved to be such a success that we did not consider any target on the African continent, that was within Dakota range, to be beyond our capabilities.

Perhaps though, Schulie's greatest contribution to the concept was his now concrete hard faith in the qualities and abilities of the African soldier in Special Force techniques . . . hitherto considered in military circles to be beyond his capabilities. It was Schulie's personal example, high qualities of leadership, expertise and ability to survive in circumstances of extremes of physical and mental pressures in which most men would give up, that inspired the African soldiers working with him to produce the splendid results they did.

Schulie was always regarded with awe and held in the highest regard by the African Scouts, a feeling incidentally, which was wholeheartedly shared by the European element of the Selous Scouts, from their Colonel down to the newest joined ranker.

After a whole series of quite remarkable exploits, I wrote citations for Schulie and his African half-section of the time, Sergeant Mpoto. I recommended Schulie for a bar to the Silver Cross he had already won while serving in the Special Air Service, and Sergeant Mpoto for a Silver Cross.

I was called to Army Headquarters where it was probingly put to me that as Schulie had commanded the reconnaissance teams, only he should be awarded a medal, as all vital decisions must have been his. I argued that this was not entirely the truth and the underlying reasons for the success of many of the reconnaissance operations, were directly due to the African team members who were often able to get right in, almost next to terrorist camp fires, which would be impossible for a European. Again, in many situations Schulie had to rely implicitly upon the advice of his African partner who obviously had a deeper understanding of the thinking and likely reactions of people of his own race. So reconnaissances were very much joint ventures, even though the final say on a course of action and the responsibility for it, would be Schulie's.

The depths of penetration into enemy territory, sometimes as much as two hundred kilometres, had also to be considered. Both men of a team deployed by free-fall parachute, static line-parachute or by helicopter, accepted tremendous risks when sent on these missions, and a multiple of things which were out of their control could go wrong and place their lives in

extreme jeopardy. There was an ever-present and real prospect of capture, holding the inevitabilities of torture and a painful death.

Initially, they had carried special suicide pills to be taken in the event of capture, but eventually they were discarded as the men wouldn't carry them. The final, perhaps the most unnerving prospect they each faced, was that of being wounded by the enemy in a hot pursuit, in which case it was unspokenly understood the unwounded partner would shoot his friend or ensure he shot himself, so he didn't become a prisoner of the enemy and compromise the operation, or spill vital information while under enemy interrogation.

After I had made these points to an attentive medals' committee at Army Headquarters, I was faced by a long silence which, I concluded at the time, must have been agreement. I drove back to Inkomo, certain in my mind that each would get the Silver Crosses they had most certainly earned. Then on Thursday, the 16th March, Major-General McIntyre phoned me from Army Headquarters and told me Captain Chris Schollenberg had been awarded the Grand Cross of Valour, and Sergeant Mpoto the Silver Cross of Rhodesia.

I was overwhelmed with delight. Schulie clearly deserved the honour . . . he had earned it many times . . . but he was the first . . . and still alive, so I had never expected it.

I immediately set out to find Schulie, but he wasn't around camp. After several frustrating hours during which I was forced to keep the incredibly exciting news to myself, I traced him to the Rhodesian Light Infantry Barracks at Cranborne, where he was watching a medal presentation to other members of the Army.

I called the duty officer at Rhodesia Light Infantry and asked him to get Schulie to telephone me back immediately.

I sat impatiently at my 'phone waiting for it to ring. When it did I picked it up.

'Schulie, Sir.'

'I have some interesting news for you . . . Sergeant Mpoto has been awarded the Silver Cross . . . they have given you the Grand Cross of Valour . . . please accept my sincere congratulations.'

There was a stunned silence on the line. In the background I could hear the strains of a military band playing, *When the Saints Come Marching In*, the regimental march of the Rhodesian Light Infantry.

He started to speak, but then stopped as if he were all choked up.

'Sir,' he finally said, 'tonight I am going to get drunk . . . in fact, I'm going to get very, very, drunk.'

And so Captain Chris Schollenberg, in his own quiet and self-effacing manner, stepped forward to join the ranks of those other heroes of military history, who also never really believed they had done anything to earn a high award either.

The Selous Scouts always had their medal parades in the privacy of our barracks for security reasons, and few people were afforded the rare privilege of watching these parades. I say privileged with all due humility, because the ceremony attached to a Scout medal parade was unique, original and incredibly moving . . . even to the most hardbitten.

When I gained my first-hand experience of the Africans of the Selous Scouts singing, I decided immediately we would never have a regimental band like other units . . . we would sing instead.

A large repertoire of regimental songs was built up over the years of our existence, and there were some very fine ones indeed amongst them. Many of them were terrorist by origin, with changed words to accommodate the Scouts. The regimental song, in particular, a most stirring dirge sung when we were on the march, was one we had stolen from ZANLA, in much the same way that the British 8th Army had snatched *Lili Marlene* from Rommel's Afrika Korps, in the Western Desert of North Africa during World War-2.

All potential Scouts, both black and white, had to learn all the regimental songs on the final phase of their selection course, for singing them played a very important part in our ceremonial life.

The venue for our medals' parades was the drill square of the African recruit's basic training

camp to the north of our main barracks. This was so parents, loved ones and the relatives of the recipients could attend the parade without entering the main Selous Scout camp, which was classified as a security area.

I always made every effort to get as many men as possible back from the bush for these parades, for they were especially good for morale and *esprit de corps* . . . they made every man feel he belonged to a very close family.

The parade itself was run on very simple lines, but the effect it produced was impressive and memorable. The Regiment, well over fifteen hundred strong, would form up in a solid phalanx with a frontage of ten, led by the officers. The warrant officers and non-commissioned officers, their traditional scarlet sashes contrasting vividly with the drab camouflage denims which we always wore on those occasions, would take up positions to the rear of the parade. The parade was formed up some three hunded metres from the parade ground on a road passing through a thick belt of trees.

The first indication the spectators had that the parade was under way, was a distant ground-swell of close harmony singing as the Unit stepped out to the regimental march. The singing would rise in intensity and suddenly the Regiment would burst into view through the trees, only twenty five metres from the square.

Marching to the regimental march and totally distinctive in their brown berets and camouflage, the Selous Scouts on parade were an unforgettable sight.

On a medals' parade the pending recipients, regardless of their rank, headed the parade in the position of honour in front of the Officer Commanding of the Regiment.

The Regiment would come to the halt in a single crash of boots and take up position to await the arrival of the President of Rhodesia, those to be invested forming a single line in front.

When the President's car appeared I would call the parade to attention.

'Battalion . . . shoulder arms!'

The President's car would draw up in front of the parade and I would wait while he alighted.

'Presidential salute . . . present arms!' I would order next.

On the last rifle movement as the officers came to the salute and where the first bar of the National Anthem would normally be struck, the parade instead would break into the warrior-like harmony of the special Selous Scout song of welcome.

Once the last man had received his medal and had fallen in once more, the line of recipients would about-turn and face the Regiment.

The Regiment would then present arms and salute our heroes as was their rightful due.

After a pause, the Regiment would break into a traditional Shona song to honour them.

It was a vastly moving ceremony which never failed to make a deep impression upon those who watched, and numerous were the eyes which showed the unashamed glint of tears.

There were nine Selous Scouts due for decoration at the same time as Schulie. Between them they were to be awarded a Grand Cross of Valour, two Silver Crosses, two Officers' of the Legion of Merit, one Member of the Legion of Merit, and three Bronze Crosses.

On this parade, because of the honour Schulie had brought to us, I got permission from Com-Ops to concentrate the whole Regiment for the presentation and as soon as they had reported to Barracks, rehearsals for the parade were put under way. We were given four days to rehearse for the parade which was scheduled for the 16th June.

A parade order was duly prepared by the Unit Adjutant and routinely sent to Army Headquarters for their perusal and approval.

A day or so after this I was 'phoned by General Hickman, the Army Commander.

'Ron,' he said icily, 'I've been going through your parade orders . . . what is the meaning of having me arrive before General Walls. I'm Army Commander . . . this is an Army parade . . . I take precedence.'

'Well, Sir,' I said, 'I'm afraid I took it as read that as General Walls as the Commander of Combined Operations, he ranks senior to you as Army Commander, but if that is wrong, it's no problem. I'll get a signal out amending the orders immediately.'

The General rang off and I sent for my Adjutant.

'I can see a hassle looming,' I told him. 'Send out a signal changing the order of precedence between General Walls and General Hickman.'

A day later my 'phone rang again . . . this time it was General Walls.

'Ron . . . what is the amendment I see here that I give precedence to General Hickman.'

I took a deep breath and outlined what had occurred.

'Well, I'm not arriving in front of him, do you hear!'

'Sir,' I said, 'this has nothing to do with me and I don't want to end up as a tennis ball being bashed between the two of you. The Regiment very much wants both of you to come . . . the chaps will expect it.'

'Well, I'll go into this,' he said sourly and put down the 'phone.

Apparently a high level argument ensued which ended with the Goverment Protocol Officer having to arbitrate. I have no idea what the eventual outcome was, but on the day of the parade, General Walls did not arrive, which was a shame as he was a great favourite of the Selous Scouts. It was a shame also for both Generals Walls and Hickman, who should each have been big enough to have put their squabbles behind them for such an important occasion.

During rehearsals I suggested to the African Scouts that it might be appropriate for a special song to be produced in honour of Schulie. I was keenly interested in the outcome, but as the limited time for rehearsals passed quickly by, no sign emerged of a new song.

On the second but last rehearsal I sent for the European and African Regimental Sergeant Majors. I was not very happy that my suggestion had not been taken as an order.

'Where the hell is this song?' I asked angrily.

The African Regimental Sergeant Major looked away uneasily, unwilling to meet my eye.

'There is no song, Sir,' explained the European Regimental Sergeant Major.

'What exactly do you mean by this?' I said getting really acid.

'Sir,' said the European Regimental Sergeant Major, 'I'd better explain. The African soldiers have had long discussions about this and they have decided they must sing the regimental funeral song.'

'The funeral song!' I was absolutely aghast. 'Why . . . he's not dead?'

'Sir,' continued the European Regimental Sergeant Major, 'they insist that the long-term bravery of Captain Schollenberg means he should have been killed in action twenty times over. Therefore they insist the funeral song is appropriate when he gets his medal.'

I glared at the African Regimental Sergeant Major who looked at me anxiously.

'Is this correct?' I asked. 'Is this what you have decided?'

'Yes, *Ishe*,' he said, 'it is the African way of paying him honour and respect.'

The medal recipients attended only one rehearsal and during that there was little singing, so Schulie remained, for the time being, blissfully unaware of what was in store for him.

The presentation of medals was not to be the only purpose of the parade, for as the Regiment had reached battalion size, we had been approached sometime before by Army Headquarters with an enquiry about Regimental Colours.

I had given the matter a lot of thought and had then written to Army Headquarters telling them we felt the Colours of a normal infantry regiment were inappropriate to the Selous Scouts. I explained that it was difficult to explain the honour value of Regimental Colours to an African, because he had nothing like them within his tradition.

There was a parallel in the Zulu war of 1879, after the total rout and subsequent slaughter at Isandhlwana by Cetshawayo's impis, of eighteen hundred British Imperial troops and colonial irregulars . . . six full companies of the 2nd Royal Warwickshire Regiment, twenty one officers and five hundred and eighty one men of the first and second battalions of the 24th Regiment – the South Wales Borderers, sixty eight men of the Royal Artillery, twenty six troopers of the Natal Mounted Police, twenty two men of the Natal Carbineers, seven men of the Newcastle Mounted Rifles, three men of the Buffalo Border Guard and eight hundred African warriors of the Natal levies.

Two officers of Her Majesty Queen Victoria's 24th Regiment of Foot, Lieutenant Neville Coghill and Lieutenant Teignmouth Melville fought with bravery and desperate tenacity to defend their Regimental Colours which were in danger of being captured, but they finally fell beneath the great fluted stabbing assegais of the Zulu regiments.

Coghill and Melville were awarded Victoria Crosses ... the first ever to be awarded posthumously ... and lauded for their gallant actions in the manner traditional, which demands the British always celebrate their defeats as if they were victories.

The Zulus though, had been astonishingly unmoved by the spoils of victory which were now rightfully theirs ... they looked on the sacred green silk as purely impractical *limbo* which they trod uncaringly into the mud on the banks of the Buffalo River while, being more practically minded, they engaged in stripping the dead of their handsome jackets of scarlet and their Martini Henry rifles.

Which was why I suggested that maybe something more in keeping and significant to the African might be more appropriate ... particularly as we in the Scouts had always made a point of incorporating and melding the customs of both races. I suggested a traditional European pike, surmounted by our osprey stylised in silver, below which would be set the horns of a bull bound in position by elephant hide ... both of which denote strength in African custom. Between the horns, I said, should be set a boss of Zebra skin – to symbolise the multiracial character of the Regiment, below which would hang a satin bannerette embroidered with the regimental motto of ... *Pamwe chete* ... together only. To complete it I suggested hanging two wildebeest tails from the tips of the bull horns ... they are traditionally used by witchdoctors to banish evil spirits.

I requested Army Headquarters to provide me with the monetary equivalent of what would normally be spent on purchasing Regimental Colours so we could arrange the manufacture of the Selous Scouts' Standard.

This request, as usual, took an inordinate time to be actioned by Army Headquarters, in spite of constant reminders, so we finally went ahead and crafted our Standard, most of the work being done by our own men.

It seemed opportune when discussing the medals' parade with General Hickman, so I brought up the fact that our Standard was ready and requested we be presented with it officially by the President of Rhodesia on the forthcoming parade.

The request was turned down flat ... it was impossible to give the President sufficient warning.

'In spite of this,' said General Hickman, 'I have no objection to the Standard actually being on Parade.'

A half-hearted nod to me was, as usual, as good as a full-blooded wink, and I was determined I would march the Standard onto the parade ground in the approved manner of Colour presentation parades, come what may.

The morning of the 16th June, dawned crisp and clear, and at 10h00 the Regiment of Selous Scouts, over fifteen hundred strong, marched onto parade with all due ceremony.

The parade ground, sited on the highest point of Inkomo camp, afforded an unrestricted view across some thirty kilometres of veld and farm land of the Great Dyke range of mountains, which bisected Rhodesia from north to south and contained most of the Aladdin's treasure of minerals that Rhodesia possessed.

A perfect view ... a perfect day.

I waited until all the dignitaries, including the President of Rhodesia, had arrived and were seated and all compliments had been paid.

'March on the Standard! Battalion present arms!' I ordered.

It was an order that was certainly not on the programme.

The Selous Scouts broke unexpectedly into the regimental song, while from behind a building, to the utter astonishment of Lieutenant General Hickman and his Chief of Staff, Major General MacIntyre, a standard party, comprising a subaltern wearing his Bronze Cross,

flanked by two African colour sergeants, each wearing a Silver Cross, suddenly appeared and marched across the full frontage of the parade ground, the spectators, including the President of Rhodesia, automatically rising to their feet and standing to attention.

The Generals reluctantly saluted. I appreciated their feelings of bewilderment.

In my position in front of the Regiment, stiffly standing to attention and at the salute, I smiled inwardly, well aware that what had been done could never be undone.

The Regiment at last had a Standard . . . not just a thing brought on parade by leave of the General.

The President of Rhodesia, engrossed as he was in this highly unusual military parade, gazed benignly about him, totally unaware that a gross breech of protocol had taken place beneath his very eyes.

The Generals, after a startled glance at the President, realised immediately he was blissfully unaware of what it was all about and wisely kept their counsel.

No lengthy citations were read out for reasons of security.

'Captain Schollenberg has, in the presence of the enemy, performed deeds of the most conspicuous gallantry and daring. In doing so he has exhibited extreme devotion to duty and courage of the highest order.'

The President of Rhodesia, John Wrathall, then pinned the first of only two Rhodesian Grand Crosses of Valour ever to be awarded in the Rhodesian Army, onto Schulie's chest.

Schulie about-turned and faced the Regiment.

I had warned him only just prior to the parade of what the African soldiers had planned, and he stood there, a great bearded giant of a man, gazing out over the heads of one and a half thousand men who all thought he was just about the greatest, bravest soldier they had ever met, or would ever meet.

The poignant and measured words in Shona of the funeral song rolled out from the Regiment and rang away in echoes to the distant hills beyond.

To translate the words, means the immediate loss of something intangible, the least being the harmony, but to paraphrase it, the words went something like this:

'Come all you soldiers of the Selousi . . . Selous Scouts;
We search for the men who rebel against our country;
We live in the bush;
We live like homeless ones;
We seek the enemy;
Who wish to destroy our country . . . Rhodesia.'

There were few eyes not wetted by tears amongst the spectators as the haunting harmony rang out. Few of the Europeans watching knew or understood exactly the meaning of the words . . . but the meaning was, in truth, a subtlety that transcended people or language.

Corporal Obasi's Group: Killed by PATU: June, 1978

Corporal Obasi, by playing ZIPRA against ZANLA in a sector which contained elements of both factions, had been able to control a huge area comprising parts of the Rengwe and the Urungwe Tribal Trust Lands and keep them free from terrorists.

For these exploits, the incredible details of which would probably fill a book on its own, he was awarded the Bronze Cross of Rhodesia.

After resting for a while, he returned to operations in June, and soon got wind of a ZIPRA group which had slipped through his area and was based up in the Selous farming area near Hartley.

Obasi and his men made immediate preparations to move there.

To be totally blunt, we did not like working within the European farming areas due to the high risk factors, for not only did we have to contend with the highly aggressive white farmers who were prepared to shoot on sight, but also with the Police Anti Terrorist Units (PATU) who patrolled the farming areas and were renowned for their fast shooting. Last, but by no means

least, was the chance that many of the African labourers on the farms would still be loyal to their employers whom they had served for many years, and thus the report of the whereabouts of a pseudo group would be made to the authorities, and get to be known amongst the European farmers.

Prior to his deployment, the usual signals *freezing* the area of operation were sent out.

The *freezing* system, designed to enhance the safety of the groups, required each Joint Operational Command (JOC) and Sub Joint Operational Command (Sub JOC) in whose areas they were to operate, to send a return signal to Selous Scouts, Inkomo, acknowledging the *freezing* of a particular area and confirming it was free of Security Forces.

Tragically, the Selous Scouts' duty operations' officer, failed to notice that a small slice of the area, Corporal Obasi's operations' controller had requested be *frozen*, lay outside of the *Hurricane* operational area, and inside *Grapple* operational area. JOC, *Grapple* was therefore not advised.

Late during a Saturday afternoon, I received a message from the Special Branch representative at JOC, *Grapple*, asking if we had any troops operating within a particular area for which he gave the map code number. I checked the operations' room map, saw Corporal Obasi's sticker indicating his presence there and replied in the affirmative.

The Special Branch officer at JOC, *Grapple*, became very concerned and anxiously asked us to get someone to the Selous Police station as quickly as possible, as there had been a contact in which four terrorists had been killed. I sent my acting second in command, Major Boet Swart, together with the African Regimental Sergeant Major and a Special Branch officer, to the Selous Police station, some sixty kilometres away from Inkomo, to view the corpses.

While they were on their way, I caused a thorough check to be carried out of all the signals relating to the particular *freezing*.

The operations' officer, his face ashen, came to make his report . . . his face told me everything before he spoke. I knew that Corporal Obasi and his men were dead . . . killed by their own forces, because the words: 'JOC, *Grapple*' were omitted from the addressees on the *freezing* signal.

An hour later Boet Swart 'phoned from the Selous Police station and confirmed the tragedy with one word.

'Yes.'

A Special Branch officer attached to us, took charge of the bodies and their equipment on the pretext of arranging finger prints and ballistic checks on the weapons *captured* in the *contact*.

Boet Swart, to maintain security, was forced by the circumstances to smile and congratulate the Police Reservist farmers who had comprised the PATU stick making the kills . . . although inside . . . he felt like crying.

The Police Reserve PATU stick members, flushed with their success, had a wild party at the local club at which beer flowed freely, while the Selous Scouts' party, with heavy hearts, returned to Andre Rabie Barracks with the shattered corpses of their comrades.

It was the only mistake our operations' staff made in seven hectic years of war, but it was a mistake which cost the valuable lives of four Selous Scouts . . . four comrades . . . four friends.

Operation Abduction-1: Beit Bridge Area: June, 1978

We knew from Special Branch intelligence that there was a large ZANLA detachment east of the Beit Bridge to Bubye road. The Detachment Commander was well-known, very wary and difficult to bait into a Fireforce contact.

Lieutenant Mike Kerr had tried with a pseudo ZANLA group already and found himself in an extremely sticky position.

Using contactmen, a meeting had been set up between the pseudo group and the local Detachment Commander, but he had not been taken in. At the meeting place, he arrived with a far stronger force . . . some fifty terrorists . . . and immediately attacked.

In this contact no terrorists were killed, but the Selous Scouts lost one African trooper killed in action.

The Mtetengwe Tribal Trust Lands and those adjacent areas where the terrorists were thought to be holed up were not ideal, so far as the terrain was concerned, for pseudo work. Being flat, there were no high features where observation points could be established and from where Fireforce could be guided onto target.

It also meant that European control of a group could not easily be maintained to give it extra back-up, as again, there was nowhere for them to hide up and direct operations and . . . if they shadowed a group, their cover would soon have been blown.

Something had to be done . . . we hadn't killed a terrorist in the area for six months.

Various theatrical plans were discussed and discarded in efforts to find some method of luring the Detachment Commander into a compromising position. Finally, an elaborate plan was arrived at in discussions between Lieutenant Ben Botha, the troop commander on the spot, his Special Branch counterpart attached to the Scouts, and the Special Branch officer at Beit Bridge.

What about putting a European in with the group openly . . . his cover being that he had been captured and was being taken back to Mozambique? There had been another European . . . a hitch hiker . . . who had recently been captured by terrorists in the same area.

During June, Ben called me up from his base at Mazunga Ranch and gave me a brief outline of his ideas. I arranged for him to be picked up by aircraft and flown back to Inkomo so we could have discussions.

He put his plan to me . . . and I must say I liked it . . . it had that touch of guile and trickery which was what the Selous Scouts was all about.

Ben asked for a broadcast to be put out on the Rhodesian Broadcasting Corporation News Service . . . that the ambush of a Department of Wildlife vehicle had occurred in the Tuli circle, and that a European game-ranger was missing, presumed murdered or captured by terrorists . . . his wife and child who had been travelling with him had been found shot dead.

It would not take long, we knew, for this news to get around the local tribal grape-vine and back to ZANLA.

I agreed to see what could be done about the broadcast, but eventually, because time did not allow, it never went out.

Game Rangers, it must be added, were probably the most hated of all Government officials working in or near the tribal areas. For the more tribal and less enlightened African considers it his fundamental right to kill and eat any animal of the veld. Conserving them for future generations does not complicate his thinking, as to him they are *res nullius* . . . they belong to no one . . . and he strongly resents the implication that the white man has, by his actions, taken them over.

Sergeant Wally Insch volunteered to become the kidnapped Department of Wildlife ranger.

He was dressed in shorts, khaki shirt and game department beret and his hands were loosely bound behind his back to show that he was a prisoner, but which would enable him, should the need arise, to free himself quickly and grab his FN rifle and webbing, being carried by the *terrorist* who had been detailed to *guard* him.

His group consisted of twenty five men, plus himself.

The plan was for him to be walked eastwards towards Mozambique by his group, from a point ten kilometres west of the Bulawayo to Beit Bridge road, just south of Mazunga ranch. It was hoped that, by this ploy, his group would be able to make contact with the ZANLA terrorist detachment they were after, on the pretence they wished to make arrangements to pass their prisoner back from group to group until they got him to Mozambique.

They were dropped off in the area by truck just before midnight, where they waited for a couple of hours and then marched throughout the rest of the night, covering some fifteen kilometres. They did not bump anyone on route, which was not really surprising, as all the tribesmen in that particular area had been moved into PV's . . . protective villages . . . and the curfew did not allow them out at night.

The next morning they stumbled on the tracks of terrorists . . . it was distinctive because of the sole pattern . . . there were twenty or so.

They followed the spoor across the flat and featureless terrain, the callsign all the time taking orders from their *prisoner* . . . who was also in command!

After walking some distance they came upon a pan . . . where there was an abundant evidence of the tracks of game and cattle. It seemed a likely place to find people and they soon did. There was the sound of African-type music in the near distance.

Wally stayed hidden amongst the bushes with the majority of his callsign, while two or three men went forward to investigate the source of the music.

They found a young African girl, whose presence had been obscured by the cattle which were drinking from a pool of water in the centre of the pan. They gave her their prepared cover-story of what they were doing in the area, including naturally, the juicy titbit of them having a European prisoner and said they were looking for a group of comrades to hand him over to, who could take him back to Mozambique.

'You have come to the right place . . . there are some comrades just near here,' confirmed the girl.

They stayed talking with her, while one of the Scouts walked back to let Wally know the good news.

He told his men to order her to go to the resident ZANLA terrorist group and tell them they were in their sector and had a European prisoner whom they wished to hand over.

The girl, as Wally had anticipated, was very eager to assist.

She returned some time later. 'They want to know who you are?'

The Scouts had been carefully briefed by Special Branch, so they knew the method by which groups made contact with each other in that area . . . it was by letter.

The Scouts wrote out a letter of introduction and sent her off with it.

They hung about awaiting her return. When she did, it was to report the comrades were on their way.

This time she came back much sooner than the previous time, making it obvious they were now very close by.

'They will come here to see you,' she announced.

Four terrorists came walking from the bush, their weapons slung. They did not appear to be in the leastways disturbed. Wally stayed in the ambush position with the majority of the Scouts, while one of his men moved forward to have words with the terrorist Section Commander.

Suddenly one of the Selous Scouts fired his RPG-7 rocket launcher, whether by accident or design will never be known, and the projectile struck one of the terrorists full on at point-blank range, killing him outright.

The survivors scattered in all directions and . . . in the shock of the unexpected happening, the Scouts' fire was late and wild . . . so they got away.

Wally penned a note and pinned it to the corpse, accusing him of being a Selous Scout . . . *Skuz'apo.* It was hoped this might serve to cause confusion, for contacts between jumpy terrorist groups were definitely on the increase.

Having done this, they continued their eastward trek and crossed the Salisbury road.

Once to the east of the road they sought out some local tribesmen who, after being told who their visitors were, took them to a safe place to base up and sent for the local contactman. After hearing their story and looking with great interest at their prisoner, he went off to arrange food to be brought back to them by the locals.

More discussions followed, after which the contactman agreed to set up a meeting between the local ZANLA group and the pseudo group, and he departed to fix it up. Shortly afterwards he returned and guided them to another bush camp, approximately three or four kilometres further on and said they should await him there.

While they were waiting for his return, curious locals came from every direction bringing food delicacies such as cooked chickens and other titbits as well as African beer.

They also brought young girls offering them for the pleasure of the pseudo terrorists . . . which had become the custom.

On the insistance of these locals, Wally was pushed into the clearing and made to kneel. As more visiting locals arrived, they joined a fast gathering crowd who just squatted in a half circle and examined him curiously.

Then a young girl . . . Wally was to discover the most brutal of his tormentors were females . . . got onto her feet and commenced abusing Wally, which he could not understand for she spoke in Venda.

When she saw her efforts were appreciated by the crowd, she commenced play-acting as if she were a European female reprimanding her gardener for not working properly. This seemed to excite the crowd immediately and many stood up to come over and kick and slap him.

Wally's men did what they could to protect him from serious injury, but they could do little more, as if they'd given him too much protection, it would have aroused suspicions and blown their cover. As night fell beer began to flow freely and a party spirit began to pervade the crowd . . . but between them, they only had one basic party trick with numerous varieties . . . the tormenting of the white man.

After being punched and kicked until his body ached, they brought him food . . . but to demean him . . . they put it in a bowl on the ground, then made him grovel on his hands and knees and eat the food as if he was a pig . . . because white men looked like and were pigs.

While he was eating they pelted him with stones and earth clods and beat him with sticks . . . particularly on the buttocks . . . as if he was a real pig.

When they tired of this, he was made to stand and shout out ZANLA slogans which were taught to him parrot-fashion.

Then things, as he had been afraid they might, began to get out of hand. Totally unexpectedly an African girl rushed forward and smashed him over the head with a piece of dry firewood, which almost laid him out.

His men pulled the girl off . . . saying she had to seek their permission before causing their prisoner any serious harm, because he was wanted back in Mozambique by the High Command.

Fortunately, it was at this moment when things were still tense, that the contactman chose to return and announce that his *mujibas* had been in contact with the local comrades and they had asked for a meeting to be set up for the next morning.

He then ordered their move to another base, where the group would be fed and spend the night. On arrival, Wally was again fed . . . then afterwards, made to sit down and undergo a further interrogation session by the locals.

Some asked him serious questions at great length. How did he regard the Smith Government? Did he feel he deserved to be a prisoner? How did he feel about his wife and child being killed in the ambush?

Soon Wally, who had merged himself totally with his cover story . . . knowing that in the end if things went his way he would have the last laugh . . . began to feel the part . . . that he was a game ranger who *had* lost his wife and child in an ambush.

Then things got rough again and he was forced to strip to his underpants and walk around while they cat-called and jeered at him. Shouts came to see him totally naked . . . so they could compare the size of his organs with the organs of the Africans, which they insisted were bigger, better and far superior in appearance. Wally gave his senior man a quick glance which clearly contained a promise of twenty eight days detention once it was all over . . . if the matter was allowed to go further . . . and he stepped forward and intervened, telling the locals they were not allowed to play with their prisoner any more, and that they, the ZANLA comrades were in charge . . . not the locals . . . the locals had to do what they were told or be disciplined.

Everyone was then told to leave, to Wally's relief, and when they had gone the group made their way into the bush to sleep, which was customary amongst ZANLA terrorists, as they wisely did not like their last position at night to be known to anyone, in case sellouts directed a Fireforce onto them.

Early the next morning they moved back to the scene of Wally's discomfort of the previous night, and the locals brought breakfast. While they were eating, the contactman returned and

announced that the resident comrades would be arriving during the morning . . . but first they asked for another letter to answer a final query.

Another letter was written and given to a female *mujiba*, who departed to give it to the terrorist commander.

Wally started settling his men into their ambush positions, ensuring every direction of approach would be covered, as they had no idea from which perimeter the terrorists would come . . . and he intended to be ready . . . he had been through too much for this operation to fail!

Then, the girl suddenly re-appeared, this time accompanied by two armed terrorists.

Somehow they had walked right through the surprised Scouts . . . who although expecting them had not expected them so soon. They went straight to where Wally was sitting, one was carrying an RPD-light machinegun and the other, an RPG-7 and a pack of rockets.

When Wally looked up, they were a mere nine paces away from him.

Wally contorted into a kneeling position, keeping his hands so they appeared to be bound.

The terrorists halted at the sight of Wally . . . the leader looked at him, a broad grin crossing his features . . . clearly delighted at seeing a white prisoner.

They strolled towards Wally, the one with the RPD-light machinegun keeping it pointed directly at him.

Well, thought Wally to himself, if there are only two that's okay . . . I'm going to nab them.

Then, just as Wally tensed to make a grab for his rifle, there came a distant crackle of gunfire . . . perhaps four or five kilometres away to the north-east . . . someone was in contact.

The terrorists looked away, lifting their weapons in alarm. Wally who was alarmed too, scooped up his weapon and shot both terrorists dead.

As he did so the whole area of bush around him exploded in a hell of gunfire . . . the dead terrorists had not been alone and others were deployed in a crescent facing Wally's group at almost point-blank range, hidden amongst a herd of cattle. The cattle stampeded through the pseudo group as the terrorists moved forward, using them as a very effective cover. Nevertheless, in spite of their initial disadvantage, the Scouts quickly gained the advantage and the enemy broke and fled.

After sweeping forward the Scouts picked up several sets of human blood-spoor, indicating a number of terrorists had been wounded.

Other than the two terrorists killed by Wally as the engagement opened, the girl *mujiba* who had been acting as the go-between, was also killed in the cross-fire.

Later, information filtered back indicating that a further three, or it might have been four, terrorists died from their wounds and were buried out in the bush.

Auxiliaries: ***Pfumo re Vahnu*** **(Shona) –** ***Umkonto wa Bantu*** **(Ndebele) – So-Called Spear of the People**

At the particular stage of Rhodesia's history reached by mid, 1978, a situation of complete uncertainty prevailed in Rhodesia.

The world had refused to allow . . . by means of withholding political approval by way of recognition and the lifting of United Nations Sanctions . . . Rhodesia's white Government to come to any political accommodation with the terrorist organisations, both ZAPU/ZIPRA and ZANU/ZANLA, other than by thinly disguised moves, which, had they been accepted, would have meant a direct and immediate hand-over of power by the Rhodesians, to the men with the Soviet AK rifles.

To get around this deadlock situation, the Rhodesian Government, in an effort to keep Government in responsible hands, be the hands black or white, embarked on moves to form an Interim Government in combination with black Nationalist leaders, who were prepared to foreswear terrorism, and white members of the existing Rhodesian Government.

The idea was that if the world would not agree to any form of settlement acceptable to the Rhodesians . . . then the people in the country – both black and white . . . would work out their own accommodation together.

It was hoped, it was thought, that Nkomo would agree to join the ranks of the black leaders who would form the Interim Government . . . if he had joined those ranks there is no doubt that he would have become Rhodesia's first African Prime Minister and gained the approval of both his Soviet friends and the West . . . the latter nations had always looked on him, quite unjustifiably, as a sort of black Messiah.

Instead, the first of the black leaders who finally joined the Interim Transitional Government was Senator Chief Chirau – who had never dirtied his hands with terrorism in the first place, so in the new scheme of things he was to have little effect because unfortunately, in the crazy situation of conflict within the country, he was lamentably far too respectable to count.

The second, and the first who really mattered, was Ndabaningi Sithole, who had once been number two to Joshua Nkomo in the early 1960's, when he was the undisputed overall African Nationalist leader in Rhodesia. Sithole had led the split resulting in the birth of ZANU/ZANLA, but had recently, although he wouldn't admit it, been deposed as ZANU/ZANLA leader and replaced by Robert Mugabe . . . although he still enjoyed some support.

The third was Bishop Muzorewa, a man of the cloth, who had been dangling his pudgy toes in ZANU/ZANLA terrorism since his first effective appearance on the African Nationalist scene in 1972, when Lord Pearce had made his brief walk-on, walk-off appearance on Rhodesia's stage, to test African opinion on the acceptability of yet another of those seemingly endless, but still hopeful, proposed constitutional settlements which never got off the ground.

To have credibility the climate demanded the African leaders practically demonstrate they had the African people behind them . . . that they had a grass-roots following . . . whatever that might have meant.

Chirau had no cross-tribal political following and he never pretended that he had, but he did have a large tribal following of his own tribe and the following of a moderate African middle-class in the towns . . . and, more importantly, the respect of the white Europeans.

Sithole and Muzorewa were different kettles of fish though, and each immediately made extravagant claims that they controlled between them, the vast majority of the ZANLA terrorist organisation both inside and outside the country . . . and . . . that most of the ZANLA terrorists in the Rhodesian bush would now come in and fight on the side of the Government . . . because there was now . . . with the coming in of a Government which would lead to African majority rule . . . no further need for them to stay in the bush and go on fighting.

So . . . the machinery of Muzorewa's African National Council and that of Sithole's Zimbabwe African National Union . . . both internal organisations based in Rhodesia, the latter, no matter what Sithole claimed, having no connection with the warring ZANLA except for a minimum amount of personal support given by some of the ZANLA old guard to Sithole, who had, after all, been around in terrorist circles for a considerable period of time.

In little time both Sithole and Muzorewa were making wild claims that the ZANLA terrorists in vast areas of Rhodesia had, in fact, come in and were now fighting on the Government side.

Lengthy and voluminous nominal rolls were produced and studied by the Government with more optimism than the dictates of common sense demanded.

Money was produced to feed, clothe and pay the alleged fleshy substance behind the misty names on the nominal rolls . . . and . . . this money flowed out from the Prime Minister's vote in vast jingling quantities through the pockets of the Special Branch, which were ordered to be generously opened up by the Government.

It was decided at very high level of Government that the Special Branch and the Selous Scouts . . . the good old all-rounders of the Rhodesian war . . . would undertake the training, the administration and feeding of all terrorists who came in from the bush and who aligned themselves with either Muzorewa's African National Council, or Sithole's Internal ZANU.

This duty, we were ordered, was to take priority over all of our operational responsibilities. General Walls personally told me that these orders included committing every Selous Scout to the task, should it become necessary.

Neither my officers or I viewed the new order of things with any marked enthusiasm, because

none of us could see it working, but orders were orders, so the Selous Scouts swung into disciplined action.

Chief Superintendent Mac McGuinness, Special Branch, arranged for two farms to be used as base camps, one was near Beit Bridge and the other, the most important, was Blackwater Farm in the Plumtree area.

I selected a number of Selous Scouts, both black and white, and with Peter McNeilage in command, they moved down with a Special Branch team headed by Detective Inspector Henry Wolhuter, and the circus . . . for it was to prove little more than that . . . got under way.

Then . . . when everything was set up to handle the expected horde of incoming ZANLA terrorists, who had turned to wearing the coats of the Interim Transitional Government . . . after accepting their money in such large sums . . . very few, relatively, pitched up . . . but with those that did, we got down to work re-training, or training them from basics, as the case might be, for most had never been terrorists.

It was vital the inmates of the camp, who comprised ex-terrorists and locally recruited party members masquerading as genuine terrorists . . . to make up the numbers . . . did not know that they were being trained and administered by the Selous Scouts – the dreaded *Sku'zapo* . . . and they never did.

We had our pretenses . . . and most of the so-called terrorists pretending to be terrorists . . . had their pretences too.

The exercise tried the patience of all of our soldiers . . . both African and European . . . to the absolute limit.

All training carried out had . . . naturally . . . to be of a terrorist rather than of a Security Force nature and, at first, the terrorists were somewhat suspicious when they observed the expertise in terrorist training and systems of operation displayed by their instructors who, of necessity, were forced to slow down in case they gave the game of who they were away.

The European Selous Scouts . . . tough men who were used to being tops in any terrorist situation . . . had to get used to the idea of being continually threatened with firearms when entering or leaving the camps, and some very tense, although perhaps understandable, situations occurred.

The more we had to do with the whole pathetic set-up, the more we came to realise that the Government . . . and through them the people of Rhodesia . . . were being taken for a long and bumpy ride.

Muzorewa and Sithole only had a minimum of genuine terrorist support, and each was using the auxiliary concept and the money it generated from Government . . . as a means of producing private armies from nothing . . . and certainly, no such armies had existed in the first place. The intention behind the concept of the so-called auxiliary terrorist was, that once they had been re-trained and embued with enthusiasm for their new duties, brought about by their support of the Interim Transitional Government, they would be set-up in *frozen* areas . . . no Security Forces would be allowed in them . . . and they would be left to minister the tribal people there in much the same way as they had been doing when working for ZANLA or ZIPRA objectives . . . except now, they would do it with the interests of the Interim Transitional Government at heart.

In effect, it meant the tribesmen in those areas given over to auxiliary administration, would be preyed on in the same merciless fashion as by ZANLA and ZIPRA, and the *reformed* terrorists would live off the fat of the land, like ticks.

This, in theory, would relieve the Security Forces of the responsibility of controlling those areas and leave them free to fight the war in more vital areas elsewhere . . . and . . . the Interim Transitional Government would, with some justification, be able to claim they had vast tribal areas of Rhodesia and a large proportion of the tribal population under their control.

We in the Selous Scouts, and, for that matter, the rest of the Security Forces, viewed the whole exercise with considerable scepticism and with even more vocal criticism . . . and . . . how right we all turned out to be.

Vast sums of money were squandered on this foolish project which had been made the top war

priority. Preference was even given to them over ourselves, regarding the issue of captured terrorist weapons and equipment . . . stuff we continually and desperately needed for anti-terrorist operations.

The exercise was graded *Top Secret* . . . and very few members of the Selous Scouts or Special Branch, except for those actively involved, had any idea of what was afoot.

Many of the Selous Scouts were aghast when they heard whispers of what was happening, and I had to do a lot of fast talking to get them to accept as duty, something they could only regard as the next best thing to high treason.

After the first two, another camp for auxiliary terrorists was established at Mangula, and on a given day the Quartermaster's staff hurriedly erected a tented camp there and then, even more hurriedly, departed . . . leaving behind only the Selous Scouts who had been detailed as instructors, to await the arrival of the terrorists who were being transported to the new camp, firstly by air, and then by truck.

The air-lift took place without a hitch and by mid-afternoon all of the suddenly respectable terrorists had been safely ensconced in their new camp at Mangula.

The first thing they did, as a matter of sensible form, was to establish a road-block and a barrier at the entrance.

While all this was going on, a truck containing a signaller attached to the Selous Scouts and driven by an African driver, which had left the camp earlier for Inkomo, returned because of a series of mishaps. Firstly, they had taken a wrong turning, and secondly a wheel on the truck had punctured. By the time they had repaired it and got back on the right road home, it was the late afternoon . . . the time most favoured by terrorists to lay ambushes, as it gave them the approaching night hours to evade any follow-up which might be mounted.

So, sensibly, they decided to return to the auxiliary camp they had been helping to establish, so they could spend the night in safety there.

At the camp's entrance the signaller was horrified when an armed ZANLA terrorist leaped from the bushes and challenged him.

The signaller, a quick-thinking soldier, wasted no time on asking questions but leant out of the window and shot him dead.

The driver reversed in a flurry of stones and dust and drove hurriedly away in the direction opposite to the camp, so they could make a report.

The situation they left behind became nothing less than traumatic.

The Selous Scouts' instructors at the camp, both European and African, suddenly found themselves at the focal point of just about every terrorist-handled weapon in camp . . . a false move on the part of one of them would have spelt the death of them all at the hands of the trigger-happy auxiliary terrorists.

The Selous Scouts' captain in command and his Special Branch partner had a trying time convincing the terrorists the death had been an accident. For two days it was touch and go and this lasted until we were forced to fly the Minister of Defence for the Interim Transitional Government, out to the camp. Even he . . . a former and apparently reformed terrorist . . . found himself experiencing heavy weather in his efforts to convince the suspicious camp inmates that the shooting had been due to an unfortunate catalogue of errors.

Shortly after this, a command decision was made to deploy the Mangula-based former terrorists into the Wedza Tribal Trust Land, from where a large number of them emanated, and the area was duly *frozen.*

I nominated Captain Basil Moss to control them, and he set up an operations room adjacent to the Wedza Police Station.

Basil, a fluent Shona speaker, was not, to say the least, enamoured by his assignment.

Then, on the Sunday only three days after their first deployment, Basil called me on the radio.

'I really don't know whether to classify this as good news or bad news, but I got a report earlier from a Police Reserve Air Wing pilot who was overflying the Wedza Tribal Trust Land, that he had seen about thirty ZANLA terrorists sprawled, apparently dead, by the roadside. He landed and

took me up and I counted forty one corpses. There can be no doubt they are from the group I've been controlling ... particularly, as the panic-stricken survivors are still streaming into the Wedza Police camp, like they're re-enacting Napoleon's retreat from Moscow!'

I could sense that all those listening in on the Selous Scouts' radio net were hardly showing signs symptomatic of being in mourning ... particularly those who had been forced, by circumstances not of their choosing, to endure the insults and indignities of being threatened with loaded weapons by the arrogant auxiliaries during training.

Captain Moss and the Police from Wedza checked the massacre scene out ... after having first got the story from some of the auxiliaries fortunate enough to have survived.

A small group had detached from the main body to look for women and beer, and were captured by a group of genuine ZANLA terrorists who had been watching their activities with keen interest.

Two of the captured and, very much subdued auxiliaries, had been ordered to return to the main body carrying a letter requesting a meeting be organised.

In their inexperience, the auxiliaries had happily made arrangements ... and ... all had ended up as ZANLA prisoners.

The terrorists had gleefully tied them up, marched them to a road and commenced executing them in pairs, using impromptu firing squads.

The full horror of what was happening registered as the guns started to pop, and those still alive made a mass escape attempt amidst a hail of bullets, and a hundred and ten of them survived.

The terrorists had captured and kept all their weapons and equipment.

Yet, in the darkest of clouds there is inevitably a silver lining, and so there was in this one. After the killings I sent Lieutenant Bruce Fitzsimmons and his group of operators into the area.

The ZANLA terrorists based there, cock-a-hoop with their recent success, jumped at the suggestion contained in an introductory letter that they meet up with another group of Muzorewa's auxiliaries ... to discuss them coming over to the side of the Interim Government. They happily attempted a repeat performance of their first highly successful trick.

The result was a quick succession of rude shocks for the local ZANLA ... and, in a matter of a week, twenty nine ZANLA terrorists were set-up and killed either directly by us or by the Fireforces.

Bruce Fitzsimmons thought the idea a great one, as the Wedza terrorists began to topple like the proverbial nine pins and he was continually pestering Basil Moss after this for more opportunities to use his group as live bait.

By this time, it was becoming apparent to everyone ... even to the most optimistic, that neither Muzorewa nor Sithole commanded any support of substance amongst the ZANLA terrorists, and the real support they had enjoyed, had dwindled away rapidly once ZANLA had turned the intimidatory screws a few times on the tribal population.

It was ridiculous wasting the labours of specialist personnel, like the Selous Scouts, on the people coming in ... most of whom had never been terrorists and were the dregs of the African townships who'd been hastily recruited by the Sithole and Muzorewa organisations, using liberally dealt out sums of Rhodesian Government money.

So, the Selous Scouts were withdrawn ... their places being taken by regular Army and Police personnel ... and so ended our involvement in this unsavoury chapter in Rhodesia's history.

Urungwe Tribal Trust Lands: Internal Operations: June, 1978

ZIPRA had made heavy inroads in their incursions into the Urungwe, Rengwe, Mukwichi and to a limited extent the Sipolilo Tribal Trust Lands. ZIPRA's power base being the Matabele tribe, they were most unpopular amongst the Mashona population of those areas and to achieve any form of co-operation from the tribesmen, they usually resorted to brutality as a first and last resort. Political murders rapidly reached endemic proportions, and any visit to those areas by Security Forces was inevitably followed by the murder of a supposed sellout the next night.

We infiltrated a small pseudo ZANLA group into the Urungwe Tribal Trust Land, where they were greeted with open arms by the tribesmen.

The group were given a letter by a large meeting of people to take back to the ZANLA High Command in Mozambique, requesting forces be sent to Urungwe from Mtoko to attack and wipe out the ZIPRA gangs who were making life unbearable for the tribesmen.

Corporal Hamale, a Matabele who could easily pass himself off as a Mashona, was selected for this task, and working through the local ZANU hierarchy he was deployed into the Urungwe Tribal Trust Land on the 28th June.

His first task was the elimination of a group of ZIPRA terrorists who had been responsible for the murder of two European catholic priests at St. Ruperts Mission, the murder of nineteen tribesmen in the Zwimba Tribal Trust Land and the murder of another five tribesmen in the Chirau Tribal Trust Land.

Posing as the leader of a ZANLA group, Corporal Hamale made overtures through the local ZIPRA network.

'Tell your commander,' he said to the local contactman, 'we are both fighting for the same thing . . . the eradication of the white man . . . let's join forces and work together. This way we will be stronger and more effective. If we fight each other, we only make the white man more secure.'

The message bore fruit and a meeting was duly set up.

Corporal Hamale approached the meeting point with even more trepidation than usual, for not only was he an imposter, but he also represented ZANLA, whom ZIPRA hated as much, if not more than the Rhodesian Security Forces.

Someone in concealment amongst the rocks, shouted to him in Sindebele, ordering him and his men to put their weapons on the ground and approach the rendezvous with their hands up.

Corporal Hamale pretended not to understand and the order was repeated, this time in Shona. He then complied with the order and to the huge relief of he and his men, ZIPRA terrorists, instead of the half-expected hail of bullets, materialised from the rocky outcrop.

The advantages of posing as ZANLA became immediately apparent, for they clearly had no knowledge of the ZANLA structure and organisation, so could not question them in any depth, and soon a good liaison was established. Boundaries were agreed without argument and a common policy decided on for the prosecution of the war in that area. They unanimously agreed to act in concert should any good Security Force target present itself.

Corporal Hamale said he had been watching the activities of a certain Security Force Land-Rover, and suggested this as their first mutual target.

The Land-Rover he suggested, was being driven by Sergeant Major Bruce Antonwood, the Selous Scouts' operations controller for the area.

A plan of attack was agreed upon and the ZIPRA commander supplied Corporal Hamale with some of his men to help him. Needless to say, they were soon captured, and other *attacks* planned in quick succession, reaped a harvest of the balance of the ZIPRA group of eight, during the next few days.

When the last three were brought in as prisoners to the deserted farm house Bruce Antonwood was using as his base, disaster very nearly occurred.

He heard the Land-Rover pull up outside and the driver switch off. Then, he looked up in astonishment as the African soldier driver ran from the truck shouting in panic.

The three terrorist prisoners tumbled from the Land-Rover and started running in the opposite direction . . . they were clearly escaping.

Bruce didn't hesitate, and grabbing an AK-47, he double-tapped each terrorist who crumpled to the ground, their dead or dying hands releasing the grenades they had been clutching.

There were three vicious explosions which almost blended into one. The three ZIPRA terrorists were blasted to pulp and the explosion severely damaged Bruce's Land-Rover.

I first heard about the incident when Bruce, a highly irate Bruce, came through to me on the radio and asked permission to send three drivers back to Inkomo for twenty eight days detention. He also enquired if I could send him a replacement Land-Rover.

It transpired afterwards, that the escorts who had gone to collect the prisoners from a rendezvous with Corporal Hamale's group, failed to follow standard procedures and search the prisoners when taking them over. The terrorists awaited their opportunity; then, when the Land-Rover stopped at the farmhouse, they seized it and produced grenades.

Information gleaned from the remaining prisoners enabled Special Branch to capture four more ZIPRA terrorists in Salisbury, who were planning to carry out bomb attacks on urban targets, and another four based up in the lower Zowa African Purchase Area.

Shortly after this, another section of eight ZIPRA terrorists were captured under the expert guiding hands of Bruce Antonwood. They were transported to our Bindura fort and quickly turned to our cause, re-equipped and then re-deployed into the Sipolilo Tribal Trust Lands as auxiliaries. Once there, however, they quickly reverted to type, much to our concern, but fortunately disappeared soon afterwards. We assumed they had returned to Zambia, for no trace of them was ever found again.

Corporal Hamale, meanwhile, had recruited and trained his own ZANLA gang and for a period of almost three months he lived in a twilight world where death could have come to him at any time. By doing this, he was able to keep large tracts of the Rengwe and the Urungwe Tribal Trust Lands free of ZIPRA terrorists, gaining an enormous amount of intelligence at the same time. Eventually, it came down to us from other sources that the newly recruited ZANLA terrorists were becoming suspicious of Corporal Hamale . . . it seemed to be merely a question of weeks before he blew himself.

I arranged a rendezvous out in the bush with Corporal Hamale, and put the position to him quite bluntly. His recruits were suspicious . . . they would get him, if we didn't get them first.

'You have done a fine job . . . now you are in grave danger. It's time to get out.'

Hamale looked a the ground, shuffled his feet, then nodded slowly. 'What about my men, *Ishe*?'

I sensed he had forced himself to speak . . . I could see by his face he knew in advance what my answer would be.

'They must be killed, Hamale . . . I will have to arrange it.'

'But, *Ishe,* they are my men . . . I trained them,' protested Hamale forcing his eyes to meet mine.

I watched the interplay of emotions on his face. The men I wanted to kill so easily were now his comrades . . . they had shared many experiences together. Have I lost him? I wondered. Was he going to be the first Selous Scout to turn on me? I knew in my heart he was not going to set them up for the kill.

'Hamale,' I said urgently, 'you know they must die . . . all of them . . . for your own sake, if for no other reason.'

'*Ishe,* I have an idea,' said Hamale desperately, 'let us take them to Mtoko and release them over the Mozambique border.'

'Hamale,' I said severely, 'you are an intelligent man, but what you are saying is incredibly foolish. They are the finest trained terrorists in the country because you have trained them. If we let them go, they will go over the border, then collect more weapons and return to Rhodesia. Think of all the people . . . black people and white farmers . . . perhaps even soldiers who will die as a result of this whim of yours. No, there is no other way. They must die.'

'Yes, *Ishe,*' agreed Hamale despairingly, 'you are right . . . they must die.'

I left Corporal Hamale to return to his group and went back to see Sergeant Major Bruce Antonwood and the Special Branch officer working with him.

'I'm worried, Bruce. We might lose Hamale . . . imagine him as a terrorist. Think of the havoc he could cause.'

'Why don't we recruit his gang instead of culling them?' Bruce asked.

'Say they take him out for even suggesting it?' I said.

'I think we could make it work. Let's make a plan with Hamale to capture both him and his group in batches . . . then we'll feed them the *offer they can't refuse!*'

'Once we have turned them it won't matter if they find out Hamale was a Selous Scout all along,' added the Special Branch officer.

My hopes rose. 'I'll leave it with you two chaps . . . organise it if you can.'

The plan worked like a charm and Corporal Hamale, highly relieved to learn of the change in plan, worked enthusiastically to ensure its success. After the last of his group had been captured and they had all been brought together, there was a sudden stunned silence when they learned their leader was a fully-fledged Selous Scout, but in the end, it added much to Hamale's stature with them as a leader of men.

Operation Abduction-2: Fort Victoria Area: July, 1978

There had been a sudden and very marked rise in the abduction of Europeans by ZANLA in the country areas, particularly in Manicaland and Matabeleland. Many of the abductees, we knew from Special Branch sources, had been walked out to Mozambique.

Until then . . . except for the odd instance, as with the kidnap of Gerald Hawkesworth, in January, 1973, when incidentally, Charlie Krause, then with the Rhodesian Light Infantry, but later to become a Selous Scout, took up the spoor of the terrorists and their victim and tenaciously stayed with it for an incredible seven days before losing it deep inside Mozambique . . . it had been ZANLA's strategy to murder helpless European civilians rather than take them prisoner.

Now, it seemed, ZANLA wished to project a new image to the world . . . that they were *moderate-freedom-fighters-who-were-certainly-not-anti-white* and . . . the best way for them to achieve that, it seemed, was for them to collect a few white prisoners . . . white prisoners had greater propaganda potential than the chopped-up corpses of the unarmed and helpless missionaries which had brought them such a bad press.

The latest kidnap victim, the wife of a Goromonzi farmer who had not been overly fit, had apparently been trundled on a wheelbarrow most of the distance to Mozambique . . . hardly a tough-nut military target that history will laud them for.

A ZANLA commander, named Shelton, was operating in an area east of Fort Victoria which straddled the main road to Umtali. He was slippery and cunning and very difficult to close with . . . all operations mounted in efforts to get near him had drawn complete blanks. He was unlike the prototype ZANLA commander in the field, and he had a great fondness for high living which he took to ridiculous lengths . . . he moved about his section mostly in cars belonging to the locals . . . disdaining the traditional terrorist manner of walking. He dressed well, ate well and lived life up to the best of his ability.

But, every man has a vulnerable point . . . his Achilles heel . . . and Shelton's was a conceited pride in his abilities as a medic. If we were to get close to him, then we needed something to capitalise on this particular aspect of his psychology . . . it could be that.

Sergeant Wally Insch again volunteered to act as an abductee, in an effort to rub Shelton from the ZANLA blackboard.

Special Branch came up with as full a briefing as was possible in the circumstances, and the starting point was to be a small village clustered around a mine, just off the main road from Fort Victoria to Umtali.

In the immediate vicinity of the mine, lived a well-known African businesswoman who owned and operated an African eating house. She was reputed, according to Special Branch, to be the most important contactman, (or woman for that matter), in the area.

Wally Insch's cover story was that he had been travelling by road to South Africa, to where he intended to immigrate, when his car had broken down. While tinkering with the engine to get it started, a group of *comrades* had chanced upon him and taken him prisoner.

He had not, the story would go, submitted without a desperate struggle and during the fight he had been fairly badly wounded and was thus in urgent need of medical attention.

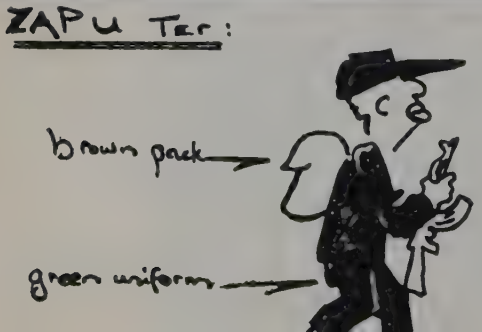
It was hoped that when the story drifted back through the grapevine to Shelton, his ears would immediately perk up. A captured European smuggled through his network back to

OPERATION TURMOIL: ATTACK/RECONNAISSANCE KAVALAMANJA: FEBRUARY/MARCH 1978

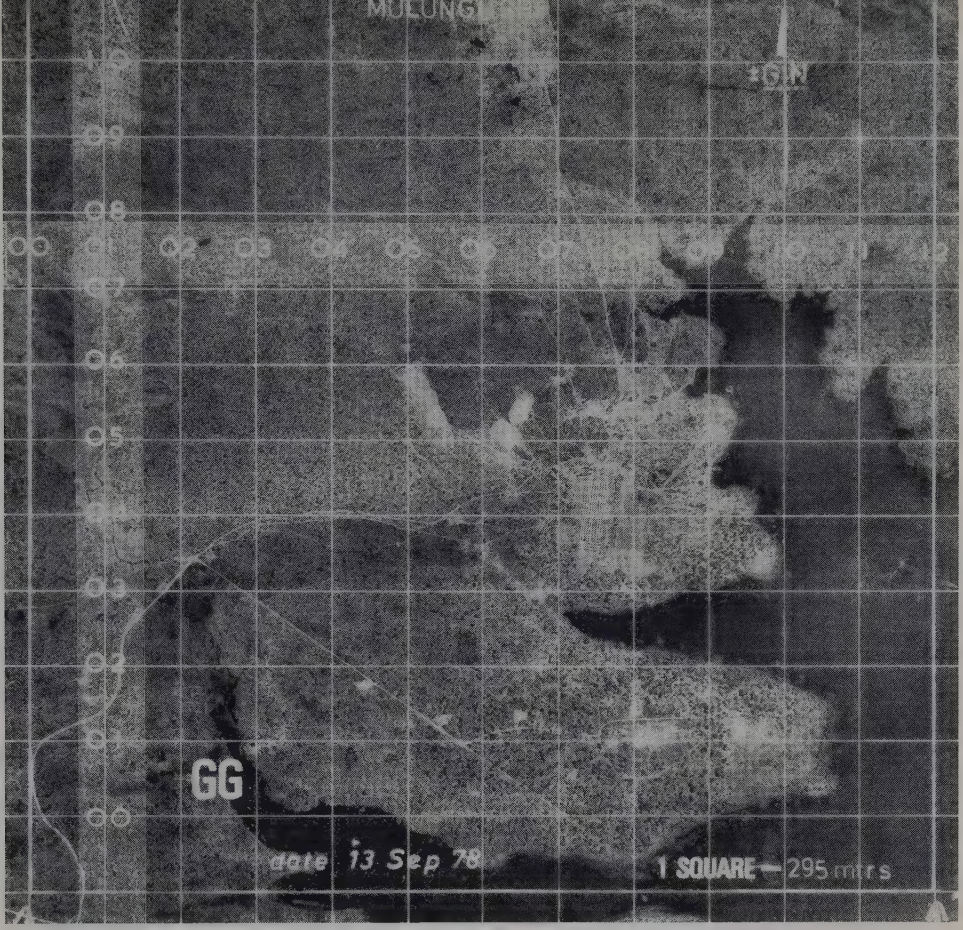
59. Overlooking Kavalamanja terrorist base, as photographed by Schulie.

60. Turmoil – Sergeant Chibanda looks down on Kavalamanja ZIPRA base.

61. and 62. Turmoil – Two ZIPRA terrorist encampments as seen through the telescope.



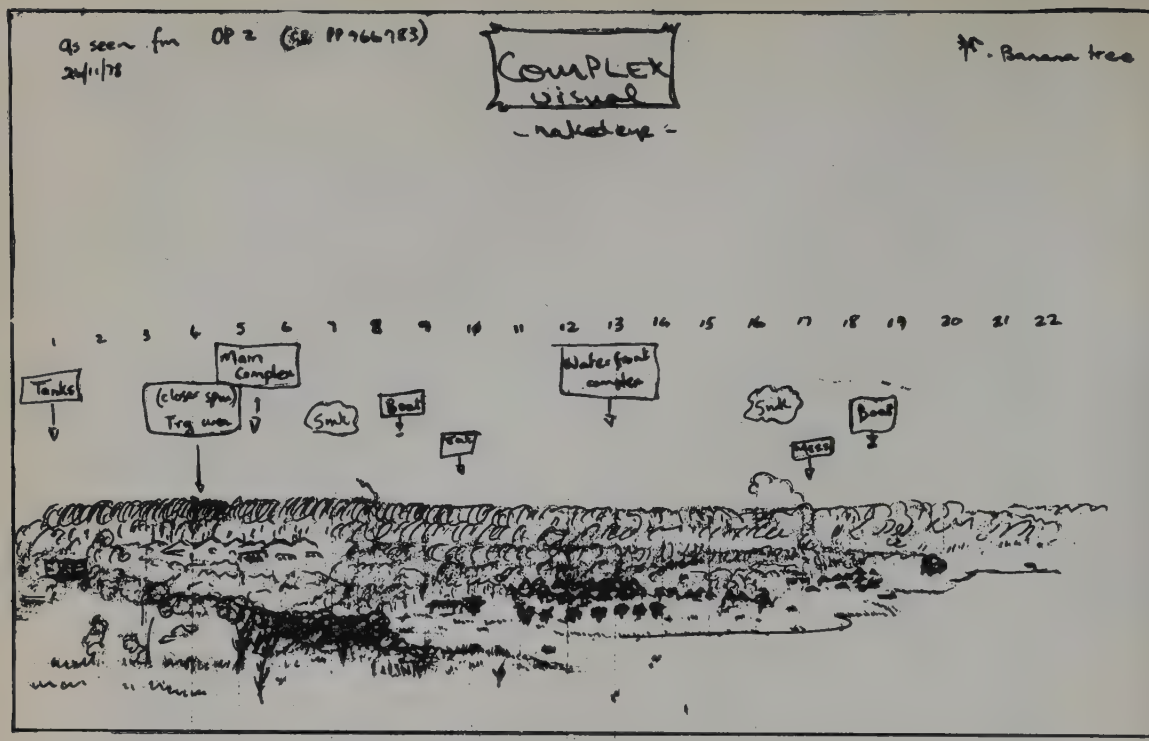
63. Turmoil – How the ZIPRA were dressed, as sketched by Schulie.



OPERATION PYGMY – RECONNAISSANCE FOR AIR STRIKE ON MULUNGUSHI ZIPRA BASE: NOVEMBER/DECEMBER, 1978

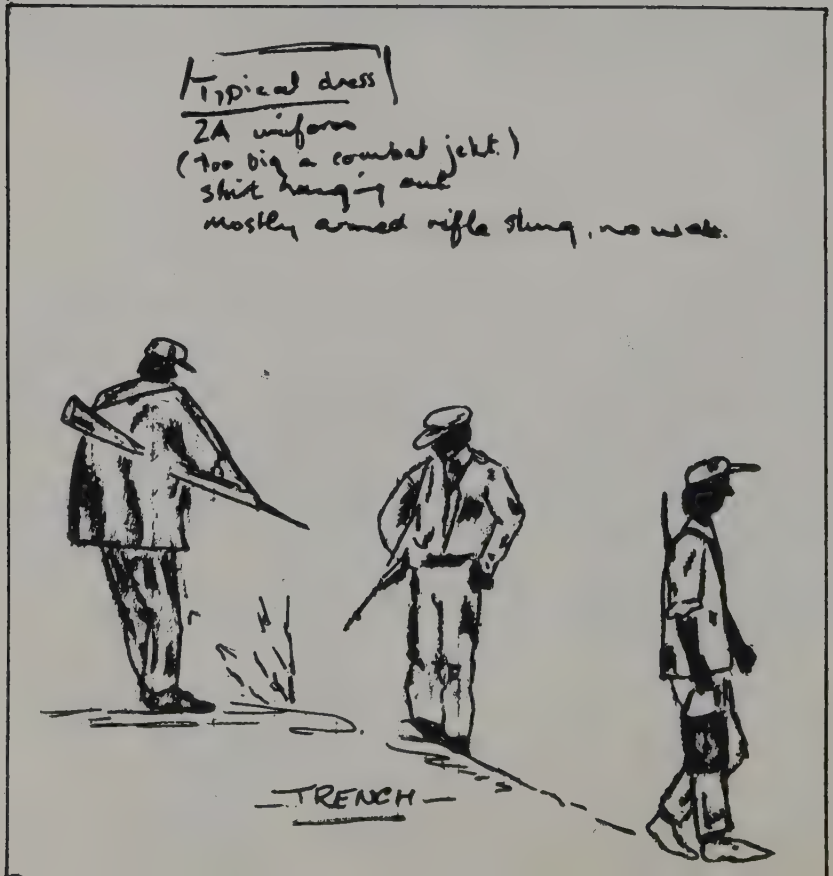
64. As seen by the Air Force.

65. As sketched by Schulie through a telescope.



66. Pygmy – Mulungushi as seen and sketched by Schulie.

67. Pygmy – ZIPRA regulars as seen and sketched by Schulie.



Mozambique would be a feather in his cap . . . but . . . one who was badly wounded, maybe even dying . . . whose life he could save through his medical skill . . . that was another story altogether!

To make Wally seem an even more interesting and colourful prisoner, part of his cover story was an admission he was a Territorial soldier who had seen action against ZANLA terrorists on several occasions.

It was a chancy situation, operating close to a European residential area, and no one liked it . . . all Europeans carried guns and would open fire without question . . . but in the circumstances, Wally had no option. So early in the morning of the first day, immediately after deployment, he and his pseudo callsign walked through the outskirts of the mine village and made their way to the eating house, where they approached the contactwoman.

She was immediately taken in and did not hesitate, particularly after seeing for herself that they had actually captured a white man . . . a hated *Mabunu.*

She led them circuitously to some other Africans who guided them, together with their alleged prisoner, to a safe hiding place on the outskirts of the village.

It was quite disturbing for Wally to discover the vast support the ZANLA terrorists had in the area, even though until then, the locals had not apparently, even met any ZANLA terrorists before.

The locals were most impressed and excited when they heard news of the captured white man. At first they were too nervous to even approach the pseudos, but after they got used to them being around, their enthusiasm mounted almost hourly.

They laid a torrent of complaints at the feet of Wally's men, including some about two local European personalities who shared a reputation for being very harsh with their African workers. The locals requested, with no little enthusiasm, that the *comrades* be kind enough to kill them!

Wally Insch's men confirmed they would gladly do so, but only after they had passed on their captured prisoner . . . so, they would kill the two *Mabunus* on the return trip.

During the next few days the pseudo group and their prisoner were passed from the hands of one set of helpful locals to another . . . all the while moving them in the direction of Mozambique . . . and, they were quite certain . . . in the direction of Shelton.

The men were treated like kings by the villagers and fed all sorts of prime foods and titbits . . . cokes . . . biscuits . . . sweets . . . anything they mentioned as a desire, was immediately sent for and pressed upon them.

Wally though, did not have such a royal time.

He was perturbed, as they moved deeper into the tribal areas, how the open hatred displayed towards him by the tribesmen, because he was a white man, seemed to increase the further they got in. This was particularly so amongst the younger set . . . children . . . even those little more than toddlers who had never before set eyes on a white man, spat at him as he passed by.

On one occasion he was put on display in a cave to which the tribesmen trekked in from miles around to gawk at and prod him as if he was some sort of a freak . . . which, of course, being a white prisoner of Africans, he was.

His men, posing as his captors, allowed the locals into the cave, one person at a time . . . some tribesmen waited around for hours for the privilege of looking at this odd curiosity.

Once inside they would first look him over and then, after some encouragement from the pseudos, hesitantly at first, start to question him.

'Who are you?'

'Why are you so proud?'

'What do . . .'

It was the done thing to attempt to assault him and everyone tried, but the operators were watching out for this, so mostly, they managed to prevent it. This did not, however, mean he didn't collect a few unexpected and painful punches.

Yet, in spite of seeing the evidence of the captured European before their very eyes, this did not necessarily always mean that every group of local sympathisers they were passed to, trusted them at face value.

Tests, checks and cross-examinations on their knowledge in an effort to catch them out, was still the order of the day.

One trick used . . . an obscure one . . . was known as the goat trick . . . which fortunately was known to one of Wally's men who had heard of it in another area. The drill was for the locals to tell the incoming group they intended to kill a goat, to give them the meat to feed on.

The *comrades*, if they were genuine, would immediately decline the offer and insist that instead, the goat be brought to their camp alive, where they would slaughter it themselves.

If they passed this initial part of the test, they would then, quite naturally, have to slaughter the goat . . . but this had to follow a method, which it was clear, no one could ever stumble on by accident.

The goat's throat would first be cut and the skin carefully lifted until the windpipe was exposed. This would then be freed from the surrounding flesh with a knife and lifted. Thereafter, twine or something similar would be knotted around the windpipe, causing the goat to suffocate.

After the Scouts had carried out this ritualistic killing, the locals concerned had clearly been impressed and satisfied, and had then taken the carcase away to be cooked.

The pseudo terrorists, and a number of local hangers-on, who were clearly bathing in the reflected glory of it all, proudly helped to parade Wally for tribal chiefs, headmen and important African businessmen to see. Invariably, they all gawked and then cross-questioned him with vigour . . . clearly in awe that a European should actually be a helpless prisoner.

On the fifth day of the deployment, a large meeting of some two hundred tribesmen was convened, so Wally could be displayed for the entertainment of the people.

Individuals pranced and jived forward, vying to outdo one another in their efforts to demean and insult the helpless white prisoner.

He was made to crawl on his hands and knees while they laughed and jeered . . . they called him a dog . . . they called him a pig. They drew comparisons between his bloodless white skin and their beautiful black skins. They commented with increasing hilarity on his awful blue eyes and his ugly complexion.

Occasionally, someone's enthusiasm would run away with him and he or she would rush forward and kick him painfully in the ribs or buttocks.

Suddenly, things started to get out of the control of his operators, and a gathering crescendo of shouts and screams from the midst of the crowd demanded he be put to death.

Wally, whose cover was that of a wounded man sinking slowly towards death, because of the lack of medical treatment, had begun to feel genuinely ill, not only from the ill-treatment and beatings he had been subjected to, but also, as it had gradually become apparent, because the food supplied to him by the tribesmen had been poisoned in efforts to kill him.

He was frightened to feel a sudden deterioration . . . his body pained and his stomach griped.

Groggy and abject, his appearance presented a clear picture to the locals . . . the *comrades* would never get him back to Mozambique alive . . . he would die on the way . . . therefore why not kill him now, so everyone could enjoy the fun?

A voluble body of opinion argued for his immediate execution and decapitation, as someone suggested his head would provide a useful lesson to a certain European farmer they wished to terrorise. It would be great sport, this man had chuckled, if it were lobbed over his security fence to land on his farmhouse verandah. The rest of Wally's carcass, another helpfully suggested, could be cut up for use as *muti* – medicines, while those parts of no particular use, could be dumped in a cave.

While this interesting proposition was being discussed, Wally's men experienced great difficulty in forcing back one large and meaty tribesman equipped with a viciously large pair of fencing pliers, with which he wished to try his hand at castrating Wally.

The crowd roared its disappointment when the pseudos stepped in and stopped him.

'They have put poison in your food to kill you . . . now they see you haven't died, they are going to kill you here and now at this meeting . . . if we don't do something desperate to put them off,' one of his men whispered to Wally.

His own men commenced beating him, trying to pull their punches where they could, but the cleft stick they were in, made it imperative they be convincing. If they weren't, there were plenty of volunteers ready to come forward and lend a hand . . . or an axe, or a knife.

'*Pasi ne Smith* . . . down with Smith.'

'*Pambere ne Chimurenga* . . . forward with the war.'

They made him shout these slogans continuously and sing ZANLA songs they had schooled him in.

Wally's mind was working overtime. Even though the locals wanted to kill him . . . it was clear his men were not compromised. If he could get himself removed from the scene, there was still an excellent chance of his men making contact with Shelton, and killing or capturing him.

'Get me away up to high ground,' Wally ordered in a hoarse whisper. 'Don't let anyone come with us. Say you are going to kill me.'

His men did as they were ordered and shoved Wally, feeling more dead than alive from the effects of the poison, to the top of a nearby and fortunately well-bushed kopje.

Once there, a ragged burst of RPD-light machinegun fire was loosed into the air, and two of the pseudo terrorists retired down the kopje to report back to the tribesmen that the white man was dead.

Wally's troubles, however, had not ended. The locals were not so easily satisfied and very vocally demanded, *en masse,* that they climb the kopje to inspect the corpse of the hated *Mabunu* . . . they wanted his head . . . they demanded his parts.

Wally's men flatly refused, but the locals jostled past them and started making their way up the hill and only stopped when the pseudo terrorists threatened to open fire.

Eventually, after some heated discussion, the pseudos gave permission for two chosen representatives of the locals to go and inspect the corpse . . . but no more than two.

Wally instructed his men to cover him with a blanket and then, when the local representatives arrived to make their inspection, they displayed the still covered form to them; who, as had half been expected, demanded the right to examine the body.

The pseudo terrorists curtly forbade it.

The tribesmen protested, but when they saw there was a danger of the *comrades* killing them as a disciplinary measure, they grumblingly accepted the fact.

After they had departed the kopje, the next part of Wally's hurriedly put together emergency plan was set in motion. It was clear to him that unless something convincing was done . . . and done quick . . . the tribesmen would think it weird, to say the least, if the *comrades* left, lumping the corpse of their lately deceased European prisoner along with them.

The more reasonable and obvious thing to do would be to bury the body or allow the locals to hack it up for medicines as was their wont. Wally, however, even though a Selous Scout of some dedication, did not find this attractive, even in the cause of a successful pseudo operation!

Instead he contacted Fort Victoria, through a sub-callsign based up on a hill who was acting as his radio relay station, and requested a Fireforce be sent to the kopje on which he was *dead.*

'They must,' he asked, 'fire into the air which will cause the locals to run away . . . this will keep my men uncompromised and satisfactorily explain the disappearance of my *corpse.*'

Unfortunately, the officer at the far end of the radio conversation in Fort Victoria, would only consent to removing Wally and his callsign, refusing outright to allow a Fireforce to become involved in a mock contact.

To complicate things, a *mujiba* suddenly appeared at the top of the hill and produced a letter, saying Shelton was on his way over and wished to meet up with the group.

Even with this, to Wally's disappointment, the officer in Fort Victoria still refused permission for a prolongation of the operation.

Shortly afterwards, Fireforce helicopters appeared like avenging black dots on the skyline and the locals melted rapidly away from the foot of the kopje.

After the helicopters had come in and no firing had resulted, some of the locals, in the guise of

innocent bystanders, came up the kopje to see what was happening . . . for all was strangely quiet . . . what had happened to the comrades?

They arrived at the top to see Wally . . . a very alive Wally . . . climbing into a helicopter as if he had arisen from the dead.

The locals scattered down the kopje in superstitious horror . . . but unfortunately, it was clear that when they got over their shock and got down to group discussions, they would put two plus two together and add up to *Skuz'apo.* Like it or not, the operation was irrevocably compromised.

Operation Mascot: Second Attack on Tembue: July/August, 1978

Aircraft on photographic reconnaissance had maintained a careful watch on the Tembue complex to the north of the Cabora Bassa Dam, ever since the relatively unproductive raid on it by the Rhodesian Light Infantry and the Special Air Service, following their marked successes at Chimoio.

In due course the Air Force photographic interpreters produced photographs showing a series of camps forming a new complex nearby the old one, which was named Tembue-2.

From an evaluation of the path patterns, they had concluded there could be upwards of three thousand ZANLA terrorists living in the series of dispersed camps there.

Com-Ops tasked us to reconnoitre the area, but imposed a limitation upon us which could have had a decidedly adverse effect upon the success of the subsequent attack . . . willy-nilly the air strike would be put in exactly six days after the reconnaissance men were dropped in.

This gave us mountainous headaches, for it clearly limited the distance from target we could drop the reconnaissance team. This in turn, increased their chances of detection by the enemy.

The moon for the drop-night was unfortunately not sufficiently full to give the pilot enough moon-light to navigate accurately by, so entry by parachute free-fall was eliminated . . . any error in navigation could have made it impossible for the Scouts to reach the target area and complete their task in the limited time available. Because of this, it was decided to use a low-level static-line parachute entry, just before last light.

To speed up the completion of the reconnaissance and to ensure its success, I decided to send in two teams of two men.

Schulie and Sergeant Chibanda were nominated to drop to the north east of the complex, while Lieutenant Tim Hallows and Sergeant Amon were sent to reconnoitre the area to the west.

After parachuting in, they would move across country and take up various pre-selected vantage points from where they could keep observations. By that time, we had tentatively pin-pointed a total of seven camps dispersed over a large area, so even two teams, would have their work cut out completing the tasks by the deadline set by the Air Force.

The deployments were made late on the afternoon of the 10th July, and two days later both teams reported themselves as in position overlooking the base area.

Schulie split up from Sergeant Chibanda and took up position six kilometres away from him. They maintained communications with each other and with Tim Hallows and Amon by VHF radio.

Their first reports indicated there were nowhere near three thousand ZANLA terrorists living in the series of camps. One seemed to contain in the region of five hundred men, and another, not spotted on the aerial photographs, had about fifty.

When Com-Ops heard this, they decided to delay the raid until a more accurate assessment could be made.

On the 19th July, at about 14h00, after being in position for nine days, Tim Hallows and Sergeant Amon were alerted by people talking nearby. Peering cautiously through their cover, they were alarmed to see a patrol of six terrorists, all well armed with AK-carbines plus an RPD-light machinegun, approaching their position.

They slipped quickly away and took up another position one hundred and fifty metres away to the north. On checking their kit, Tim discovered, to his dismay, that in their hurry to get away, he had left his VHF set behind.

He waited a while, then cautiously slipped back to their last position to recover it, but he was not overly concerned as he was convinced by the lack of hue and cry, that the enemy had not discovered their presence.

But, as he reached the crest of a hill and peered furtively over, he was greeted by an unexpected fusillade of shots and he immediately, in accordance with established procedures, headed into thick bush, made good his escape and made his way to a crash rendezvous, where he was relieved to find Amon waiting for him. Having linked up, they left the area in a hurry and radioed for a *hot* extraction.

Needless to say, we considered the operation as blown. Schulie, however, was still there and he had different ideas.

After two days he reported that things, after being initially stirred up, had returned to normal. Although there were no properly organised camps . . . mostly grass shelters and hides under trees, because intelligence indicated they were generally terrified of attacks . . . there were camp fires at night and smoke from early morning cooking fires, clearly marking where everyone could be found.

Unfortunately, both Schulie and Chibanda were running low on food and drink, so they decided to meet back at the original drop-zone to replenish supplies from the cache they had left there. They met up there in the dead of night, each having been on his own for eleven days, but they had no time for idle chatter. After comparing notes, they replenished supplies and moved back to their observation points.

Com-Ops were in a quandry, for it seemed almost unbelievable that ZANLA terrorists, who were becoming pretty alive to danger signs indicating pending Rhodesian attacks, should remain in an area after having been in contact with a Rhodesian soldier . . . Schulie and Chibanda though . . . who had, by then, been keeping observations for nearly three weeks . . . were adamant.

After a lot of discussion and disagreements, Com-Ops ordered the air strike to be put in on Sunday, 30th July, but this would now be followed by a ground assault immediately afterwards.

Andre Rabie Barracks was used as a staging post for this operation, and during the run-up we had the whole of the Rhodesian Light Infantry and the Special Air Service living in bivouacs on the airstrip to preserve security.

The briefing was given in a large lecture room in our training camp. I, not unnaturally, anticipated that as Schulie and Chibanda had been at the site of the pending attack for three weeks . . . and, for that matter, were still there . . . their guidance, as the attack force made their approach, would be considered a vital factor, but to my astonishment, this was not the case. Their latest reports were read out only for information, just prior to the orders being given.

The orders were given by the Officer Commanding the Special Air Service . . . a Major. In at the briefing was the Com-Ops' Brigadier, and a number of colonels from his staff, the Brigadier commanding the operational area from where the attack was being launched, a number of colonels from Army Headquarters who were providing an administrative back-up, and the Officer Commanding the Rhodesian Light Infantry – a Lieutenant Colonel. To be truthful, I had been expecting the orders for such a large-scale attack to be given by, at least, the Com-Ops Brigadier.

I looked at the signal's net diagram while the briefing was in progress, and noticed with concern that Schulie did not even feature. I immediately brought this to the attention of the orders group.

'We asked you to ensure he would be carrying the Rhodesian A-76 set,' I was told tersely.

'But I told you in very good time . . . weeks ago . . . that the A-76 is substandard junk . . . it goes u/s at the slightest knock . . . because of this I made the point strongly that I wouldn't jeopardise the lives of my men by giving them inferior equipment . . . I made my views perfectly clear.'

I told them that, as was usual with the Selous Scouts, Schulie and Chibanda were carrying A-63 sets, and I reminded them of our common channel . . . which they were already aware of anyway.

The attack went in at 08h00 on Sunday, 30th July. Almost immediately, Schulie came up to me on his set, irritably enquiring why the Air Force were not answering his calls. He asked me to relay with some urgency that fifty terrorists from the camp below him were escaping away to the west, and he couldn't get anyone to do something about it.

There was a long frustrating delay before I managed to persuade the Air Force to contact Schulie on his VHF channel, and by the time they did, it was too late . . . the ZANLA birds had flown.

To make things worse, the paratroopers were dropped at the wrong dropping zone . . . it had been changed at the last moment, but this message had not got through to the strike force, who needless to say, were not exactly joyful afterwards. Unfortunately, the drop zones used were miles from the terrorist complex, and the terrorists easily made good their escape before the attackers had walked the long distance necessary to get there.

The issue as to whether, or not, the terrorists had been there, or not, when the attack was mounted, was hotly debated afterwards. It had not been a good operation and a great deal of acrimony and inter-unit squabbling resulted. The Air Force, very jealous of their well-earned and deserved good reputation, were collectively puce with rage when they heard the Army were accusing them of ruining the attack, by dropping the paratroopers at the wrong place. Eventually, the Army and the Air Force found common ground in a unanimous conclusion . . . the Selous Scouts had been off beam . . . there had been no terrorists there anyway!

Military Intelligence

We had lost our Intelligence Officer, Alan Lindner, for in spite of heavy opposition from us, he was posted away to the Rhodesian Light Infantry as a Commando second in charge, and nothing I said would budge the career planners at Army Headquarters from their decision. Then, just before his posting became official, Com-Ops requested he be posted to Military Intelligence as a stop-gap.

Military Intelligence was a misnomer in the Rhodesian Army for, apart from the good work of a few dedicated Territorial officers at Joint Operational Command levels, they rarely produced anything intelligent for war planners to work on.

The only area where they consistently showed value, was in the Radio Intercept Services and this, although falling under the Military Intelligence umbrella, was staffed by Signals' personnel. Consequently, we watched Alan's progress in Military Intelligence with great interest, albeit with a little cynicism, but knowing Alan, I was not surprised when only a short time after his posting, we were invited to a presentation being put on by him at Com-Ops.

His subject, which was all too familiar to me, was a concentrate of all the long talks we had had during the quiet hours at the Inkomo operations room, which he had consolidated and backed with slides and overlays.

The most vital aspect of his talk was that, for the first time, I became suddenly aware we were being given an overall strategy to work to.

Prior to this, the brigadier in command of each operational area, had used his allotment of troops to get on with the job of killing terrorists, in any way that his own ingenuity . . . or lack of it . . . had dictated.

He first gave a breakdown of current internal terrorist strengths from Special Branch sources, and followed this with a detailed picture of the external threat posed by both ZANLA and ZIPRA. It was a sombre painting indeed.

When he turned to the internal kill-rate, he clearly dropped a bombshell. A study, conducted by Military Intelligence, had categorically concluded that sixty eight percent of all terrorist kills in the operational areas had come about as a result of the direct or indirect activities of the Selous Scouts.

After those present had digested this (to some an unpalatable) truth, he went on to demonstrate clearly how the internal kill-rate came to nowhere near the current level of terrorist infiltrations. There was silence in the room . . . it was suddenly clear to everyone present that if we carried on

as we were . . . we would be swamped by terrorists and lose the war. The Security Forces had fallen into the fatal trap of spreading themselves too thinly over the ground, and by so doing, had become ineffective. It was not surprising there was frustration and a lowering of morale amongst the troops in the field.

Alan then spelled out what I had realised for a long time, the wrong type of troops were being used to man the Fireforces . . . the results showed it was no longer a hypothetical argument. Henceforth, only the Rhodesian Light Infantry, or its equivalent, would be used.

After this he turned to his maps, and by using a series of overlays, defined the vital areas of Rhodesia, which covered the most productive agricultural areas, the industrial areas and the all vital lines of communication with South Africa. The remainder of the country, he went on to say, must be left to its own devices and be visited only from time to time by small units of Selous Scouts to monitor the terrorist activities.

The Selous Scouts would henceforth be grouped into the more vital areas of the country and saturate them with as many callsigns as possible and, just as importantly, Fireforces would be boosted to maximum strength and put, without any argument, *in direct* support of the Selous Scouts to capitalise on their effort.

While it was not to say that no one had been unaware of the deteriorating position in the war, it was Alan's hard work in analysis and simplification that brought the lesson home to everyone at Com-Ops. The results which were to almost immediately follow, were to more than justify his hard work.

Although large areas of Rhodesia, consequent to this policy, became virtually no-go areas to the Security Forces, and formed the basis of the so-called *liberated areas* boasted about by the terrorists and their friends, this was not, in reality, quite true. For, from time to time, the Security Forces would enter in those areas in shows of strength, but this was all they could do, for the civil administration there had completely broken down.

It should not be believed the tribesmen necessarily welcomed this state of affairs, for countless thousands of them left those areas as refugees and made for the towns and the places where the rule of law still held sway.

It was a source of constant irritation to the terrorists too, that no matter how much *de facto* control they gained over any area, the British South Africa Police never once closed down a Police station and withdrew their men. They might, as they were often forced to by circumstances, restrict their police work to staying behind sandbagged cover and merely raising the Rhodesian and Police flags in the mornings and lowering them again in the evenings, but to their honour they did it.

Nyamaropa Police station on the Rhodesian/Mozambique border, for example, became impossible to reach by road, so thoroughly had ZANLA mined the border road.

It came under daily attack due to the terrorist determination to wipe the detachment out . . . but they never succeeded.

At one stage in 1977, the lifespan of a Policeman posted, there was estimated at about six weeks.

One night ZANLA nearly succeeded in their gritty endeavour, when they mounted a large-scale conventional attack on it from Mozambique. The ammunition of the defenders started to run out, so determined was the assault. None could be flown in due to the low cloud base, but the incredibly brave pilot of an Air Force Dakota took off despite the odds against success, or of even returning alive, and a container of ammunition was parachuted with pin-point accuracy into the fortified area.

The attackers braving the last few bullets of the Policemen, which they had realised were their last, were actually negotiating the wire and jeering at their enemies and telling them how painfully they were going to mutilate and kill them, just when that container came in. Moments later though, they retreated in disorder as a shower of grenades blasted them from the wire.

Operation Vodka: Attack on Mboroma: November, 1978

It was known a ZIPRA camp existed one hundred and forty kilometres north of the Rhodesian

Border at Mboroma in a remote area of Zambia. The camp was of particular interest to Special Branch because it was reputed to be a prison and detention camp. Not only was it said to house a number of captured Rhodesian Security Force personnel, but it was also said to hold a number of ZIPRA dissidents. We naturally wanted to free our own men, but the freeing of ZIPRA dissidents was also a very attractive proposition, as all things being equal, they would likely have some interesting and illuminating stories to tell to aid our war effort.

Joshua Nkomo's military intentions were shrouded in mystery, and we had been left guessing as to what he intended to do. The main opinion concensus held was that he was biding his time, to allow ZANLA to make all the running . . . leaving them to wear down the Rhodesian forces by a process of attrition. When they were, hopefully, worn down sufficiently, then ZIPRA would launch a conventional military assault on Rhodesia aided, perhaps, by East German or Cuban soldiers.

ZANLA, not possessing anywhere near the same number of conventionally trained soldiers, would disintegrate and ZIPRA would be left holding the victor's spoils.

The Selous Scouts were given the job of making an assault on the camp as soon as we were able to gain sufficient intelligence from a ground reconnaissance.

Tim Hallows and Sergeant Amon were tasked to conduct the detailed reconnaissance, with orders to pay particular attention to the strengths and armaments of the ZIPRA garrison, habits of the ZIPRA guards including their degree of alertness, sentry and guard systems and the general camp routine. Once they had satisfactorily established this, they would move off and survey a drop-zone some thirty kilometres away, for use by the assault force of the Selous Scouts.

Final briefings and orders would take place on the ground, after which the reconnaissance team would guide in the attack force.

The main force would base up some distance away, while the group leaders were taken by the reconnaissance team to a ridge of very high ground to the south of the camp, which afforded a perfect observation place to study the camp in detail prior to the attack.

By first light on the day set for the attack, the troops would be in position on the camp's outskirts and African Scouts, using megaphones, would call out in Sindebele and Shona to the prisoners to prevent them from panicking.

Sixty millimetre mortars set up on dominating high ground to the south, would be available to provide close support if required.

We estimated we would, in all probability, achieve a ninety percent kill of the ZIPRA guard force and free all the prisoners and detainees without too much difficulty, if we achieved complete surprise.

Then Com-Ops turned our plan down, as they were becoming increasingly concerned about the danger to our aircraft from the recently overhauled British Rapier, ground-to-air missile system. They ordered the Mboroma attack to commence with an air strike, the Selous Scouts following closely behind with a paratrooper assault. The attack would be syncronised with an air strike on Mulungushi, for which we were doing the reconnaissance, and an assault elsewhere by the Special Air Service. By doing this, it was hoped to avoid giving the Zambians the opportunity of gradually working themselves up to a high state of preparedness.

Tim Hallows and Sergeant Amon were finely briefed from blown up aerial photographs, and on the 28th November, were parachuted into Zambia some twenty five kilometres south-west of the camp.

Moving slowly, and with great care to avoid detection, it took them three days to reach the camp area. Once there, they moved to the dominant high ground and established an observation post only two hundred metres from the southern end of the camp, where they kept constant watch for the next twenty four hours. After that, they half-circled the camp and took up another position from which to maintain observation to the west of the high ground.

The weather was atrocious, with drenching rain pelting down for an average of five hours per day and seven-eighths cloud cover for most of the time.

Nevertheless, in spite of their appalling discomfort, they counted between a hundred and one

hundred and twenty prisoners within the fenced prison camp. The guards on duty seemed to vary between forty at the lowest figure and sixty at the highest.

The prisoners were never allowed out of the prison area and their time was spent performing fatigues, drilling on the square and practising mass community singing. It was clear they were being subjected to a re-education programme in a pattern well-known in communist countries.

The guards were well armed with small arms, while a 14,5 Russian anti-aircraft piece was sited in a dug-in emplacement.

The guards were air conscious and very jumpy, once when a Zambian civilian aircraft overflew the camp, the gunners immediately opened fire on it. The slightest mumble of an aero engine, even when distant, immediately caused both the inmates and the guards to stop whatever they were doing and crane their necks to the skies.

First Com-Ops said the operation was on, then they took it off again.

I couldn't leave them at Mboroma permanently, so I eventually ordered Tim and Amon to move away from the camp and lie up in safety until Com-Ops made up their minds. Finally, after another long period had elapsed and the green light still had not been given, I ordered them back twenty five kilometres, from where they were uplifted by helicopter on the 16th December, and brought back to Rhodesia.

I again suggested to Com-Ops that we action our first plan, but they kept to the view that all the proposed attacks should be launched at the same time.

At Inkomo, Richard Pomford's parachute assault force of forty two officers and men were getting well, perhaps even over-practiced, having carried out a seemingly endless number of day-long rehearsals.

A large scale papier-mâché model of the camp had been built up from air photographs and this had been studied by the men, until it was as familiar to them as the Andre Rabie Barracks.

Then, on the 22nd December, Captain Richard Pomford's paratroop task-force took off from an advanced airfield on Rhodesia's northern border, and headed north through a storm-threatened sky into Zambia. Taking off after them, but synchronised to arrive over the target area just before they did, were the most worked, but still the most willing, war-planes in the world . . . the Hawker Hunters.

The air-strike on the ZIPRA barrack-rooms and non-prisoner installations went in at 08h30 and shortly afterwards the Selous Scout paratroopers tumbled with grim precision from their aircraft, the static lines yanking out the khaki nylon mushrooms of their chutes.

Amongst them was a Police officer, Superintendent Keith Samler of the Special Branch (attached Selous Scouts), who was making history by being the first member of the British South Africa Police to make an operational parachute jump as part of his normal duties. He was later, churlishly, I think, refused permission by the Police Commissioner to wear on his uniform the Selous Scouts' operational parachute wings he had so proudly won and so justly earned.

Richard and his men landed as planned on the outskirts of the camp and advanced to attack, with sixty millimetre mortars being stonked over their heads in support.

ZIPRA resistance, which was much less than anticipated, soon melted away in the series of ragged and very much one-sided firefights which developed.

Eighteen ZIPRA terrorists were killed . . . the remainder, in spite of the time which had been spent by the Russians on muscling up their military abilities, as usual, fled.

Of the one hundred and twenty or so prisoners observed by Tim Hallows and Amon on reconnaissance, only thirty two were located by the Scouts. Some had been outside the camp on work-parties, and they along with their guards had scattered into the bush when the Hunters came in. Another large party had also been taken by the guards on a food foraging mission, and were nowhere near the camp when the attack was launched.

During the sweep afterwards, some oil drums half buried in the ground, were come upon.

On first examination they were correctly adjudged to be ventilators for some underground chambers. Richard and his men jumped to the conclusion that they were part of the camp's underground defensive system. Just as they were about to treat the home-spun ventilators to a

crop of bunker bombs, some freed prisoners screamed out for them to stop . . . they were about to blow up the underground detention cells housing the hard-case ZIPRA prisoners.

The Scouts put away their bombs and yelled down the ventilators to reassure the prisoners below, who were screaming out to attract attention, having been through the terrifying experience of an air-attack while being, in effect, buried alive. This awful experience had been followed by the muffled popping of firearms and the blasting of grenades, so it was not surprising that they should conclude their last moments had come . . . in reality, they very nearly had.

The hatches were quickly levered open and the prisoners lifted from the depths and brought into the sunlight. They stood there, almost blinded, in a small abject group, blinking in the bright blinding light of day they had not seen for a long time. They were bewildered, dejected and totally unable to comprehend what event had finally overtaken them . . . but most feared it was horrendous.

The African members of the raiding party sat down with them and gently explained in Shona and Sindebele that they were Rhodesian soldiers who had been sent by the Government to rescue them.

It then began to dawn on the prisoners that their ordeal, and it had been a terrible ordeal indeed, was over and done with. It was almost beyond belief. They were going to see their families and their homes again . . . they were not going to die in some stinking ZIPRA hell-hole in Zambia after all.

Their expressions as the comprehension of their changed circumstances . . . a pathetic mixture of hope, disbelief and joy, touched the emotions of even the toughest and hard boiled of the war-tempered Selous Scouts who watched them.

No time was wasted though, and after the camp buildings had been systematically searched for documents, they were put to the flaming torch and destroyed.

The Scouts, together with the released detainees and six ZIPRA terrorist prisoners, set off through the bush for a mission school some distance away to the north, to an airstrip which had been reconnoitred and deemed fit for use, by Tim Hallows and Amon.

Transport aircraft were flown in to uplift the raiders and their liberated protégés and by early evening they were safely ensconced at a border base camp overlooking the mighty Zambezi River, in the safety of Rhodesia.

The following day, Saturday, 23rd December, at 15h00 the party were flown to Andre Rabie Barracks, where a large delegation of the press were eagerly waiting to interview them.

It was an emotional scene, for as the freed men filed from the aircraft they formed a choral group on the airfield, and clapping their hands in a slow and measured cadence, they sang a traditional Matabele song of joy at homecoming.

The men who, until recently, had stood precariously on the lip of death, sang with a moving intensity I have seldom heard equaled. I glanced sideways at my African Regimental Sergeant Major as he did to me and for a moment our eyes met . . . no words were needed . . . we both knew the Selous Scouts had just satisfactorily concluded what was probably our most worthwhile operation yet . . . like virtue, it brought its own reward.

At the training camp a table groaning under the weight of huge quantities of good food, containers of African beer and bottles of the less traditional kind to help flush it down, was awaiting them.

While they ate, press reporters asked them questions . . . trying to get the full feel of their dreadful experiences.

Each man had his own ghastly story to relate. Stories of torture and savage beatings, of starvation and of privation, and of mind-unhinging incarcerations in pits dug deep into the raw, damp earth, for periods of up to four months at a time. One man, had been imprisoned underground in total darkness for so long he was blinded by the light when lifted from his hell-hole prison, and a medic had to bandage his eyes to prevent permanent injury.

Many of them were members of various branches of the Security Forces, abducted from their home villages by terrorists while they were on leave, others were ex-members.

Bernard, for example, was a former member of the British South Africa Police, kidnapped from a beer drink in December, 1977. They had marched him to Botswana from where he was flown to Zambia. He told a tale of awful torture when ZIPRA interrogators made every brutal effort to get him to admit being a Security Force collaborator. They had bound him hand and foot at one stage and held him over a fire until his flesh had bubbled like meat at a barbecue. He displayed frightful burn scars which would mark his body for life, as souvenirs from his ordeal. He described beatings with thick sticks, and long periods of incarcerations which brought him and his fellow sufferers to a state where they became more like wild animals than human beings. During their ordeal, the prisoners had lived only on a diet of mealie meal and dried beans.

'I was overwhelmed with happiness when the soldiers came . . . my greatest wish now is to see my wife and my two children again . . . I never expected to see Rhodesia again, let alone my family.'

Twenty two year old Njabulo, was the grandson of a Rhodesian Senator Chief. He spoke of torture with electric cables being held against his naked body, to force him to confess he was a *sellout* to the Rhodesian Government. He had been tricked into crossing the border into Botswana on the promise of an educational scholarship for higher studies. However, as thousands of other duped black youngsters had found in like circumstances . . . there were no scholarships. Instead he was given a job in the ZIPRA Publicity Department in Zambia. Then one day he was taken into custody after a denunciation and unjustly accused of spying for the Rhodesians. He was at Mboroma for re-education to rid his head of *wrong* thoughts. So much for the *freedom* the world was so keen to bring to Rhodesia, at the loutish hands of ZIPRA and ZANLA.

After the press had departed to file their stories, I stood up and spoke.

'Your freedom is a gift for Christmas from the people of Rhodesia and the Rhodesian Government. We have been pleased . . . very pleased . . . to act as Father Christmas.'

There was a spontaneous outburst of clapping, cheering and whistling, and as one they again burst into song. The atmosphere began to get very emotional and it affected everyone there including myself . . . I had difficulty speaking.

When they had finally quietened again, I asked if anyone knew who had rescued them and also if they had any idea where they were. They looked at each other puzzled . . . none of them knew or had even given it a thought . . . to them we were just soldiers . . . Rhodesian soldiers.'

'Have any of you heard of the Selous Scouts . . . the *Skuz'apo?*' I asked.

There was an immediate stirring of interest.

'Well, that is who we are . . . it was the Selous Scouts . . . the *Skuz'apo,* who parachuted in and pulled you out of Zambia. You are presently in the Selous Scouts' Barracks.'

Their first reaction was silence . . . you could have heard a pin drop as they looked at us in awe. They had heard we were demons . . . *Ngozi* . . . people who used witchcraft to kill the terrorists . . . the ZIPRA grapevine had been full of stories about us . . . all were intensely intrigued. After a short while, nine of them volunteered to join us so they too could wreak revenge on ZIPRA. The rest were concerned with what was going to happen to them now they were free.

'You will stay with us for about a week, to give us time to speak to you and record everything of Mboroma and ZIPRA you can remember. Afterwards, you will be given a bus or train ticket and sent to your homes.' This was greeted with prolonged applause.

The volunteers were attested and after taking oath, joined the next recruit intake to undergo training as regular soldiers.

The rest, wearing new clothes and jangling money in their pockets, which had been given to them by the good offices of the Terrorist Victims' Relief Fund, left to pick up the pieces where they had dropped them, when Joshua Nkomo and his ZIPRA had so rudely come into their lives.

The Rhodesian Sunday Mail, probably summed the raid up best of all in their issue of the 24th December – Christmas Eve, 1978:

Operation Christmas Cracker on Friday was unlike other Rhodesian raids which hit enemy

supply and training camps. This one, to rescue abducted Rhodesians held in appalling conditions, was a truly humanitarian action in the best spirit of Christmas. To the rescuers Rhodesians say: 'Well done, those men.'

I still feel it a shame that Com-Ops didn't allow us to use our first rescue plan, for I have no doubt that had we done so, we would have brought back to Rhodesia, home and safety, all the prisoners . . . instead of just some of them.

Operation Pygmy: Reconnaissance for Air Strike on Mulungushi: Nov./Dec., 1978

The old Army Cadet Training Centre, as it was in the days of the defunct Central African Federation, is situated on the western shores of the Mulungushi Dam, about a hundred kilometres from Lusaka.

According to information received, the Zambians had handed it to ZIPRA to use as a training centre for their conventional armed forces, which they were rapidly building up with very active Russian assistance.

Aerial photographs had confirmed the presence of a very large contingent of men living in the complex and disclosed the freshly turned earth of defensive positions.

The centre made an attractive target for an airborne attack, as with careful troop positioning during first deployment, the bulk of the enemy could, with ease and simplicity, be hemmed in against the waters of the Mulungushi Dam, which would leave them little chance of escape once the rout set in.

Doubts were expressed, however, by the Com-Ops planners as to whether it really was a ZIPRA stronghold, and much opinion had firmed on the conclusion that it was still in use as a Zambian Army camp. To resolve the question, the problem was handed over to the Selous Scouts to carry out a reconnaissance of the camp.

Schulie and Chibanda were briefed in fine detail with all the conflicting information that was to hand and, on the 19th November, they were flown by helicopter into Zambia and dropped off at 15h00, some forty kilometres south of Mulungushi Dam.

It took them five days to make their way across country on foot, through thickly treed and bushed terrain, but on the 26th November, they took up an observation position, two kilometres south-east of the target, from where they could directly look at it across a stretch of water, and where they spent the next four days.

After this, Schulie, noticing what he thought was a better viewpoint, left Chibanda to continue with his observations, and swam about six hundred metres to a peninsula. However, it was not as good as he had thought, so he linked up once more with Chibanda and they took up another position, a thousand metres from the camp, where they spent another five days and from where they had an excellent view of the complex.

The largest number of men seen, was about a hundred, marching in the centre of the barracks. Terrorists in platoon strength were often seen at eating places, and others, in section-strength, were seen in five other areas, where trenches had been identified on aerial photographs . . . although, these could not be seen by the reconnaissance team.

The most productive area for viewing was the waterfront, where between twenty and thirty eight men were often seen at any one time.

Over one period of four hours, they observed four groups of between twenty seven and thirty eight men, going to a washing point below the main complex.

They concluded that the eastern portion of the camp . . . the only area properly viewed . . . was fairly full of men. The other areas . . . the main central complex and the northernmost section, were both fairly empty.

The barrack-blocks . . . if they were full . . . were assessed as each having the capacity to sleep twenty men.

The final assessment was that only a small number of ZIPRA terrorists there were receiving basic training . . . and the majority, by appearance, uniforms, bearing, manner of weapon carrying,

type of training they were undergoing ... were conventionally-trained soldiers, rather than guerillas.

In numbers the team reckoned there to be at least two hundred terrorists in the camp.

Surprisingly, in spite of recent attacks on the ZIPRA terrorist camps in Zambia by the Rhodesian Security Forces, little notice seemed to be taken of the occasional high-flying aircraft passing over the camp area, and even less of the occasional shots being loosed off around the camp, presumably by hunters, of which there were a large number around.

To counter-balance that strange degree of indifference, was the large amount of trench-digging taking place, and the almost completed bunker system surrounding the camp, which made Com-Ops highly reluctant to mount a conventional troop attack.

The Rhodesian Army had, by then, mounted several highly successful cross-border raids on terrorist camps, both in Zambia and in Mozambique, suffering only minimal losses, and they had no desire to invite heavy casualties by attacking entrenched positions.

Consequently, it was decided the Mulungushi camp would only be bombed ... the air strike being timed to coincide with the air strike and Selous Scouts' parachute assault on the ZIPRA detention camp at Mboroma.

Schulie and Chibanda, after completing their reconnaissance, took four days to get back to their pick-up point from where they were helicoptered out.

It was the first time a reconnaissance patrol had stayed in the field for fourteen days without re-supply.

As had been planned, the Rhodesian Air Force Canberras raided the Mulungushi camp on the 22nd of December.

An intercept of the Zambian Army radio-net told us afterwards, that thirty-three terrorists were killed in the raid and many others wounded. At the time the camp had apparently contained a total of two hundred and seventy conventionally-trained ZIPRA terrorists.

PART 8

Selous Scouts' Zambian Spy Ring 1978/1979

While it was indisputable that our Reconnaissance Troop was able to produce the goods, the results were there for all to see, we still felt most strongly that we had only, as yet, scratched their full potential and that there was still vast scope left for us in the intelligence field.

Neither Chief Superintendent Mac McGuinness, or I, saw it as essential that we always drop reconnaissance teams into Zambia for instance, because an entirely different situation existed there than in Mozambique, where unless one had Portuguese speakers, there was no method other than the use of reconnaissance teams available to us. But Zambia had a relatively large English-speaking white population and, other than the Rhodesian raids on ZIPRA bases, the country was in a state of peace. Normal comings and goings by businessmen and tourists was the order of the day.

We reasoned it must surely be simple to infiltrate African or European members of the Selous Scouts into Zambia, perhaps as visitors, or maybe we could plant them there with good covers, even in employment, on a semi-permanent basis.

The Central Intelligence Organisation, however, jealously regarded all external operations, other than pure military operations, as something within their own special preserve and clearly resented our intrusion into these areas of intelligence gathering.

Mac approached them with the ideas we had formulated, but on this first approach they were rejected out of hand.

It was only afterwards, much later in fact, when we had built up a case to prove conclusively that their present set-up rarely produced the necessary detailed and accurate intelligence on ZIPRA camps, which Com-Ops always needed urgently so raids could be mounted, that reluctant permission was given for us to send Scouts, acting in the role of intelligence agents, into Zambia.

The arrangement was rigid and allowed us little latitude of movement, within its confines. There was no question at all of our ever being allowed to organise a complete spy ring of our own, as we had no alternative but to rely heavily on the expertise of the Central Intelligence Organisation to launder or provide passports, identity documents, and the full range of cover papers which might be required ... above all, they were the only source available for the procurement of Zambian currency.

Looking through the men for suitable material, my first choice became Chris Grove, a Territorial Army officer, who was Zambian born and still the possessor of a Zambian passport. The biggest problem which came up as a result of his selection, was that no one, neither the Special Branch nor the Central Intelligence Organisation, had any idea what records, if any, were kept by the Zambian Special Branch on their white nationals. Were they aware, for instance, that Chris had served in the Rhodesian Army? If they had a record of this, it was also possible they knew he was a Selous Scout.

This would, in all likelihood, mean his instant arrest as soon as he stepped into Zambia ... then he would be in trouble ... real serious trouble ... right up to his neck!

I had known Chris well for a long time and had actually trained him when he had joined the Rhodesian Light Infantry as a recruit many years before. I sent for him and gently broached the subject. He agreed without hesitation.

'Chris,' I remonstrated, thinking he was being too hasty, 'this is a very different proposition to the usual Army assignment. When you are part of a normal reconnaissance team that gets into

trouble, we automatically do everything in our power to extricate you ... even if it means committing the entire Rhodesian Air Force to hold off the enemy while we get you out. This is something different ... you will carry no arms for a start ... and if things go wrong, we will be unable to help you ... we will disown you. Then, at the best, your future dismal prospects would include torture, and afterwards, a life sentence in prison ... the worst, would mean execution before a firing squad.'

I continued telling him at great lengths to think very carefully about it ... and only to give me his final answer after two days. I made it quite clear he would have no need to feel ashamed if he decided to turn the proposition down, as frankly, I wouldn't blame him in the least if he did.

Two days later though, he was still as firm in his resolve to go ahead, and Mac too was happy to concur with my choice.

The Central Intelligence Organisation got to work and cleaned up his passport, so that no reference to his ever having been in Rhodesia remained.

We then moved him out of the country and settled him in Durban, where a good back-up cover story was created and a contact address established.

On the 27th September, he flew out to Malawi where he obtained a Zambian entry visa, valid for three months, from the office of the Zambian High Commission in Lilongwe.

Using money supplied by the Rhodesian Government, he hired a vehicle in Malawi and having obtained a triptych, drove out of Malawi via the Mchinji border post, and routinely entered Zambia through the Mwami border post.

He had gained his first piece of Zambian intelligence, either they did not keep tabs on white Zambian citizens outside the country or, alternatively, they had nothing on him.

Chris felt a very lonely man as he drove south along the Great East road which skirts Mozambique, crosses the Luangwa River and finally ends in Zambia's capital city Lusaka. He had a lot of things on his mind, and was deep in thought when he arrived at the Luangwa River Bridge and consequently failed to notice a very indistinct ... in fact almost obliterated ... white line at which, unbeknown to him, he was supposed to halt, pending a check by soldiers of the Zambian Army who were guarding the bridge.

Some black soldiers, stinking of booze, clearly welcomed the opportunity of bullying a white man. Several ran up to his vehicle shouting, and one cocked his weapon.

'You ... get out of your car ... put your hands up!'

So this is how it ends, thought Chris in abject misery, and I didn't even get started!

For the next three hours he was forced to endure questioning, ridicule and abuse by the ill-disciplined Zambian soldiers who finally, when they had had enough fun, made him kneel and apologise humbly to them while, all the time, a loaded and cocked rifle was kept pointing at his head.

After this, they very reluctantly allowed him to proceed.

On arriving in Lusaka, he booked into one of the only three hotels in the town, and set about establishing himself in terms of his pre-decided cover-story. Then, cautiously but systematically, he set about performing the jobs he had been tasked to do.

The Special Branch and Central Intelligence Organisation had long been aware that Westlands Farm on the outskirts of Lusaka to the north, was being used as a camp to house a large body of ZIPRA terrorists.

Its close proximity to Lusaka precluded a direct ground attack, as the Zambian Air Force and Army were immediately to hand, and there was concern in Com-Ops' circles in case a disaster befell the Rhodesians, who might well find themselves greatly outnumbered by the Zambians if such an attack were mounted.

There was also the risk factor of injuring innocent Zambian civilians, which would immediately have resulted in a splash of bad publicity in the columns of the world press, which would have done Rhodesia little good in the unhappy circumstances we were experiencing, where just about the whole world was against us. Additional to that, in any event, it had not been

positively proved that Westlands Farm was a ZIPRA base, and Com-Ops had no wish to launch an attack on the wrong target.

We, the Selous Scouts, had studied other methods of attacking the camp, and the best idea we had come up with, was to get someone to drive in and park a large truck loaded with explosives . . . like a Trojan horse . . . next to the main office block, in the hope its detonation would kill the ZIPRA hierarchy and, to say the least, cause a morale problem within the camp amongst the rank and file. A large-scale explosion, as we envisaged, might also, with luck, have alarmed the Zambians and caused them to kick their ZIPRA allies out the environs of Lusaka to more remote areas, where Rhodesian attacks would not cause damage or danger to native Zambians.

This, of course, would have been more than ideal for Rhodesian Security Force attacks in the future. Unfortunately, be that as it may, Com-Ops did not take kindly to our plans.

Chris's first and most urgent task was a reconnaissance of Westlands Farm . . . we needed to know everything he could find out. Hypothetically speaking, he was fairly familiar with the environs of Westlands Farm, having spent a not inconsiderable amount of time, before leaving the country, studying aerial photographs which had been made available to us by the Air Force.

He needed a cover-story to be in the area . . . the Zambians, to say nothing of ZIPRA, were most suspicious of any white man, particularly a white man in the younger more military age-group. As Westlands was passed by a good road and visible from it, Chris carried out his initial reconnaissance by car . . . the car he had hired in Malawi. At the time it was almost impossible to buy fresh milk or fresh vegetables anywhere in Lusaka, so he used this as an excuse to be in the area . . . many farmers in the country areas were selling fresh vegetables and milk direct to the public and making a fairly handsome living as a result, because of the shortages. Consequently, it didn't in any way seem implausible if a man said, when stopped at a roadblock, that he was looking for a source to purchase fresh vegetables and milk.

The general lay-out of Westlands was as he had expected it to be. At the farm gate, which opened almost onto the road bypassing the farm, was a ZIPRA guard post. Between this and the start of the main camp, which was clustered around the original farm buildings, was a large section of open ground bisected by a tree-lined drive. What had not shown up on the air photographs was that the trees were jacarandas . . . what's more, they were coming into bloom and were soon to provide a mauve arrow-like marker leading straight to the ZIPRA heart, which the Rhodesian Air Force would eventually use to good effect when they commenced their approach runs.

The main camp was screened off from the road by hessian, which was a common ZIPRA security measure. But, as security minded as they might have been, it was not difficult to detect if the camp was in full or part-use at any time, particularly if one took the trouble to drive past the camp on a Sunday, which Chris took the trouble to do . . . for Sunday was ZIPRA washing day and the hessian screen was used as a convenient washing line.

At the time of Chris' check, there seemed to be more kit than hessian, so it was easy to conclude firmly that ZIPRA were at home.

He noted that it was commonplace to see ZIPRA terrorists, often dressed in civilian clothes but carrying AK sub-machineguns, walking around giving the impression they were policing the area and ensuring there was nobody lurking around with evil intent.

Another of his tasks which he satisfactorily concluded, was a reconnaissance of Zimbabwe House, also known as Freedom House, which consisted of two blocks of buildings in Lukoma Road in northern Lusaka.

He satisfactorily plotted it for future air strikes too, because immediately opposite it was a Mosque with five green domes, which made it ultra-distinctive from the air.

Another part of his brief was to reconnoitre the road all the way from Lusaka south to Livingstone, opposite the Victoria Falls in Rhodesia, noting anything to do with Zambian Army or ZIPRA movement along route. Where did they place road blocks? What military installations were there?

The truth was that the Zambian Army, merely by posing (unwittingly I believe) as a latent

threat, had given Com-Ops considerable worries. Yet, the truth was they were a total shower . . . a military wash-out. They had not exercised for twelve years . . . their standard of readiness to fight any form of military action rated low. So far as their abilities to fight any form of conventional war against the Rhodesians was concerned, they rated at little higher than zero.

He discovered a military presence of company strength, supported by anti-aircraft weapons, at the bridge over the river at Kafue, that Police road-blocks were put up intermittently at Chilanga, a platoon presence at the Munali Pass near Mazabuka, and another larger, although totally expected presence at the Zambian Army Headquarters for the Southern Province, near Choma.

Another item of interest was that ZIPRA heavy re-supply vehicles, collected bulk maize, on requisition, direct from depots of the Zambian Milling Board. There appeared to be no restrictions whatsoever on quantities, which was particularly interesting, because at that time it was impossible to buy mealie meal . . . the staple food of Southern Africa . . . in any shop . . . the ordinary Zambian in the street had to do without . . . the Rhodesian terrorists didn't! There were, incidentally, a large range of consumer goods which couldn't be found in Zambian shops due to the blatant economic mismanagement of the country by Kenneth Kaunda and his UNIP comrades, who had dragged their once fertile country, rich in mineral resources, down to its very knees. You couldn't buy things like soap or cooking oil . . . even bread, unless you got to the bakers early, otherwise it would be sold out. Meat, in this once flourishing country, was virtually unobtainable, as the system had reverted from one of sophistication to the old market place system. Few butchers bought their supplies from the Zambian Cold Storage Commission, because few farmers sold their stock to them . . . so there was little or no meat there anyway. Instead, the butchers went and bought their stock direct from the farms. The, by then, totally irrelevant question as to whether the carcases had been passed as fit for human consumption by a health inspector, was no longer asked by anyone in the new Zambia.

Chris gained magnificent opportunities of improving his golf during that first trip and on subsequent ones . . . from the golf driving range on the Lusaka golf course, there was a clear view of Nkomo's house on the corner of Nyerere Drive and President Lane, making it an ideal spot from which to observe the comings and goings of the ZIPRA leader and his followers.

Having achieved all that he had set out to do in a period of two weeks, he left Zambia by the same route he had entered by, handed his hired car back to the renters in Malawi, and then flew without incident to Rhodesia via Johannesburg.

His re-appearance at Inkomo was greeted with the same sort of enthusiasm I had felt when the first mini-column I had thrust into Mozambique made a safe return.

We had achieved a lot . . . a Selous Scouts' spy network was a viable proposition . . . the scope for espionage activities seemed to be boundless.

On the Sunday following his return, I took Chris with me to General Walls' house where we met up with a senior Air Force officer attached to Com-Ops, who carefully debriefed him on all he had found out about Westlands.

Unknown to him, Com-Ops had already made the decision to take out the ZIPRA complex there, using air only, but as Chris was returning to Zambia on the 18th October, he was not told in case he was arrested and gave the Zambians prior warning of the raid during interrogation.

Personally I felt very bad . . . I realised with an absolute certainty that after the raid the Zambian Special Branch would, without doubt, over-react and set about arresting virtually every white recent arrival in the country as potential spies, and this is precisely what happened.

The morning which dawned two days after Chris's arrival back in Zambia, seemed a fairly routine one, although he had a lot of running around to do. He needed a Land-Rover and he intended to spend the morning looking for a second-hand one in the garages around Lusaka.

Unbeknown to him, Blue Section – two Hawker Hunters, escorting four Canberra jet bombers, were pursuing a zig-zag course at low level and homing in like camouflaged avenging angels on ZIPRA's FC base at Westlands Farm.

Synchronized to arrive at the target just after them were four K-Car helicopter gunships.

Red Section – two Hawker Hunters, were rapidly screaming within striking distance of the Zambian Air Force base at Mumbwa. Another section of Hunters – White Section, policed the area of Lusaka airport . . . ready to snarl into the attack should the Zambian Air Force pick up the Rhodesian gauntlet and challenge their strike on Westlands.

They took up position . . . watchful . . . waiting.

As sublimely unknowing and relaxed as Chris, were Joshua Nkomo's ZIPRA, passing another day of peace and security at Westlands . . . the Rhodesians would never attack Westlands . . . much too close to Lusaka . . . they'd never dare!!!

Blue Section Hunters peeled away from the slower Canberras and climbed to gain enough height from which to deliver their loads of two one thousand pound Golf bombs each, which were tucked away snug, one on each side, under their wings.

The Canberras stayed on their low level course for Westlands.

Blue Section Hunters came from the sun, mean and fast, their thousand pounder bombs fell from their wings and sped like arrows down towards the unsuspecting men of ZIPRA. Armed by a static line as they left the aircraft, the bombs exploded with a deafening concussion just above ground level, which pulverised and blasted the terrorists below. The survivors staggered about in bloody disorientated confusion, many running for the open ground beyond the buildings of the camp . . . just as the Canberras appeared, running ahead of their engine sounds . . . the basket-like fittings in their bomb bays opened and their loads of three hundred Alpha bombs in batches of fifty bombs . . . each like over-sized steel-cased footballs, rained down on the target below.

Some terrorists stood frozen in their tracks as a deadly game of soccer began. The Alpha bombs struck the ground . . . and armed . . . then bounced to fifteen feet, where their effect on the men on the ground was most deadly, and exploded devastatingly.

On the ground it was hell . . . it was havoc. First the Hunters, then the Canberras . . . Golf bombs . . . Alpha bombs.

Then, to complete the abject misery of the three thousand ZIPRA officers, trained terrorists and unblooded recruits housed in the camp, as if they hadn't had enough already, the whirlibirds – the helicopter K-Cars, came in low belching out a deadly greeting of twenty millimetre cannon shells.

Blue Section Hunters, after dropping their bombs, sped off into the blue sky leaving trails of white vapour behind them to change over sentry duty with White Section Hunters, who were impatiently waiting to stir the hellish inferno of Westlands, with their own rockets and cannons.

The Rhodesians had no means by which they could directly contact the Zambian Air Force, but they could do it through Lusaka airport who controlled the radar covering the whole of Zambia . . . Lusaka was in direct and constant contact with the Zambian Air Force.

Squadron Leader Chris Dixon, commanding the Canberras . . . Green Leader . . . knowing that Red and White Section Hunters were in position and orbiting Mumbwa and Lusaka Airport, ready to take up any challenge the Zambian Air Force might make to them, called up Lusaka International Airport.

'Lusaka Tower, this is Green Leader.'

'Green . . . this is tower,' came a puzzled but otherwise unworried reply, after a short pause.

'Lusaka Tower, this is Green Leader. This is a message for the station commander at Mumbwa from the Rhodesian Air Force. We are attacking the terrorist base at Westlands Farm at this time. This attack is against Rhodesian dissidents and not against Zambia. Rhodesia has no quarrel . . .repeat, no quarrel . . . with Zambia or her Security Forces. We therefore ask you not to intervene or oppose our attack. However, we are orbiting your airfield at this time, and are under orders to shoot down any Zambian Air Force aircraft which does not comply with this request and attempts to take off. Did you copy all that?'

'Yes, copied,' said Lusaka Tower.

'Roger . . . cheers,' said a friendly Green Leader.

Various courteous exchanges took place after this while the pulverisation of the ZIPRA base at Westlands into blood, flesh, dust and ash by the Rhodesians was completed.

Dolphin-3, an Air Force Command Dakota, took over the direction of Zambian airspace from Green Leader, who then moved out.

A Kenya Airlines jet, delayed in getting landing clearance, irritably radioed Lusaka tower to demand the reason why.

'Who has priority here anyway?'

'Well . . .' said the African controller at Lusaka tower, with dry humour, 'I think the Rhodesians do . . .'

Chris meanwhile was arguing the merits or demerits of a particular Land-Rover for sale at a Lusaka service station, when a man ran in from the street.

'Hey, have you heard the latest? The old terrs have just had their arses bombed off on the Broken Hill road!'

Chris pricked up his ears and listened to what was going on . . . then made a point of dawdling around town.

At about 10h00 the proof of the raid started to come in, with bomb-shocked survivors from Westland Farm . . . some with limbs missing, many with the most ghastly mutilations and burns. They were brought into Lusaka by car, confiscated trucks . . . anything that could move.

The University Teaching Hospital was turned into a casualty clearing station. The Zambian locals seemed to appear from everywhere . . . they came from their houses . . . they came from their jobs . . . they lined the streets and watched the seemingly endless procession of terrorists coming in from Westlands.

Rumours, many conflicting, as to what had happened, started to sweep the city like raging veld fires.

At midday Chris decided it was time to take the Land-Rover, the merits and demerits of which he was haggling over, but which he finally purchased, for an out of Lusaka test-drive. While doing so, he was fortunate enough to pick up a hitch-hiking African school teacher . . . he taught in a school almost next door to Westlands Farm. He chattily gave Chris a basic run-down on what had happened . . . it was obviously the most exciting event of his life until then.

That same afternoon Chris had a sudden brainwave. He knew how to get an assessment of casualties suffered by ZIPRA at Westlands. On entering Zambia, he had been instructed at the Immigration post to get an anti-cholera injection within a certain period of time. Wasn't this an opportune time to go to the University Teaching Hospital to get the injection done?

He got into his Land-Rover and drove up to the hospital's main gate . . . it was sealed off by guards and they refused to let his vehicle through.

Through the wrought iron of the gate he could see a melee of green-uniformed ZIPRA moving backwards and forwards, while ambulances and other vehicles came and went, dropping off loads of casualties at the casualty department.

There seemed to be no bar to movement by foot, so Chris parked his truck outside and made his way through the gate and into the casualty department. He looked around, then sat down on a bench.

On all sides of him in the casualty department, were wounded and dazed terrorists who, seeing he was a white man, glared at him with looks ranging from dislike to open hatred. It worried Chris at first but then, he reasoned, they were all so confused they would hardly know what the routine was in a hospital. In any case, it was hardly ZIPRA territory, so it was unlikely they would ask him his business there. Besides, if they did it would give him the opportunity to return the same question and educate himself from some first hand accounts.

After about fifteen minutes, a very well educated African wearing a white coat . . . presumably a doctor . . . approached him and asked what he was doing there.

Chris decided to leave his story about wanting an anti-cholera injection. The hospital was like the aftermath of a bloodbath . . . it would seem an unreasonable excuse to say the least. Instead, he said that as soon as he heard of the raid, he had come in to give blood . . . did they want it?

The doctor took a few details and told him to wait.

Even if they did take his blood, Chris reasoned with some satisfaction, the Selous Scout blood

would hardly do the wounded terrorists much good ... particularly considering his last severe dose of jaundice!

He sat there taking it all in for several hours, while an endless stream of ZIPRA casualties were brought in on stretchers and makeshift litters. Many were suffering from ghastly burns, others were grey, practically white in colour from severe shock, all were mutilated to some degree and covered in bloody dressings.

The hospital had run out of beds and they put them on mattresses, or just wrapped them in blankets and left them in the corridors.

Late in the evening army lorries arrived with loads of additional mattresses and camp beds, which were laid on the lawn out in the open ... they were filled with wounded almost as soon as they were put there.

Nobody took much interest in what Chris was doing there, and nobody returned to ask him to give blood. Eventually, he left.

The next day, by means of a little judicious ferreting, he got into conversation with a doctor who had been called to help at the hospital, and he said the number of ZIPRA terrorist casualties admitted to the University Teaching Hospital, according to the admissions' book, was six hundred and fifty.

The dead were unascertainable ... probably a lot were in pieces and uncountable too. The information, which was the talk of the town, was that hundreds of bodies had been bulldozed into mass graves.

Four days after the strike, the casualties were still trickling in from Westlands Farm ... some with relatively minor injuries had presumably not merited urgent treatment until then ... and others who had been wounded in the bush, and found only after sweeps had been made.

Several days after the raid, angry reactions against whites in Lusaka began to set in. Many were stopped by gangs of angry black Zambians in the centre of town and beaten up ... many badly. It became difficult for a white man to walk in the streets, without some truculent black thug blocking his way and demanding his name and business.

Chris' primary tasks on his second mission were:

(i) To establish the whereabouts of all terrorist bases in and around Lusaka;
(ii) to ascertain the volume of terrorist movement on the Great North road;
(iii) to establish a suitable cover and take up civilian employment on a long term basis;
(iv) to observe all Zambian Army and Police activities on the main roads;
(v) to establish safe areas where groups of Selous Scouts could hide up in the area between Mazabuka and the Munali Pass and in the Kafue area; and
(vi) to get information on the Zambian air defence system, the British Rapier missile system and associated systems.

During the course of his intelligence gathering in Zambia, both on this mission and on the third and final one later in the year, he experienced many situations in which his cover could have been blown.

Once he was placed under arrest by a patrol of the Zambian Army, who were not satisfied with the veracity of his identity documents ... he endured several uncomfortable hours of close questioning before they finally released him.

On two occasions he was arrested at gunpoint by ZIPRA terrorists ... once when they stopped him while driving near Westlands farm, some time after the air-strike, when he was checking on the renewed ZIPRA build-up there, and on another occasion when they queried his presence in the area of the ZIPRA War Council complex, seven kilometres outside Lusaka on the Mumbwa road. Each time he gained release by some fast and plausible talking at which he had become quite adept.

He escaped a near fatal situation once only by the fortuitous arrival of a friendly Zambian Policeman, after his Land-Rover had broken down during the course of a motorised reconnaissance of the Kapiri Mposhi to Copperbelt road. He had stayed with his stranded vehicle, gradually becoming uncomfortably aware he was under observation by the locals, who clearly had

their eyes greedily fastened on his Land-Rover. It had become the accepted custom in Zambia, that when a vehicle broke down, the locals would fall on it like locusts and strip it for spare parts, leaving only the body for the owner when he returned with breakdown help . . . sometimes not even that.

Chris knew of this quaint rustic foible of the locals, and quite naturally, was reluctant to leave his Land-Rover to go to seek help . . . it was paid for by Special Branch and, knowing them, they would demand it be accounted for. So he decided to wait until help came to him.

The locals, however, became irate and indignant at his outrageous impertinence . . . what's more they were soon consumed with impatience by the long wait for their rightful spoils, that he was imposing on them. So they set about him . . . the Policeman arrived and chased them off only just in time.

He achieved much despite the dangers, his most important intelligence coup being his confirmation of the location of the ZIPRA War Council . . . where, as related before, he experienced a very close shave with ZIPRA.

It was here that Joshua Nkomo's ZIPRA High Command . . . with the confirmed help of two Soviet colonels and a number of communist East Germans and Cubans . . . decided their war strategy and where various military operations were planned and controlled.

It consisted of an old farm complex geared to become the main storage centre for heavy military equipment and the principle ZIPRA arsenal for general supplies. There were always at least two hundred guards at the complex and its anti-aircraft capability included Russian SAM-7, surface to air heat-seeking missiles which were later confirmed in factuality, by Rhodesian Air Force Hunters during an air-strike when SAM-7 missiles were fired at them.

Chris was rarely still, and using a borrowed motor cycle in town and his Land-Rover out of town, he covered tremendous distances . . . his deepest penetration being along the Great North Road, to a point a half day's drive past Mpika . . . the last village before the Tanzanian border post of Tunduma.

During one trip north, he counted seventeen Zambian Army trucks in convoy, loaded with ZIPRA terrorists with Cuban soldiers as drivers. Local gossip at a Chingola garage, suggested they were on their way to Mahiba, which had been used by the MPLA as a terrorist base during the war in Angola.

He was also able to get the first rough location of Nampundwi Mine, which was a known ZIPRA base, and also confirm that a camp on the Mumbwa Road, twelve kilometres from Lusaka, was not being used by Zambian National servicemen, but by ZIPRA terrorists.

He carried out several close-in foot reconnaissances of the environs of Westlands Farm maintaining observation for lengthy periods, from two different hill features nearby the base. During these reconnaissances, he confirmed that ZIPRA were once again building up their forces there, and pinpointed the two new concentration areas . . . away from the old complex . . . for purposes of future air strikes.

One of his easiest tasks, as it turned out, was the detailing of all installations and equipment associated with the new British supplied air defence system, being installed near Lusaka Airport . . . in case it should become necessary to go in later on and devastate it.

Another tit-bit of intelligence he picked up during his widespread wanderings, led to the pinpointing of a ZIPRA training camp backing against the waters of the Mulungushi Dam, which in due course, Schulie and Chibanda were tasked to reconnoitre. These, of course, were merely the highlights of his endeavour, but little things are often just as important and which, when pieced together, give a good picture of what is going on. What were people talking about? What was the condition of roads? Were the people sympathetic to ZIPRA and so on and so forth? In this too, Chris successfully directed a constant stream of information back to Salisbury to aid our war effort.

In case the sudden need arose to call Chris back to Rhodesia, we had arranged for some bogus Police messages to be broadcast immediately after the Rhodesian Broadcasting Corporation news broadcasts. If the message said: *'Would Mrs. Glenda Green of Durban, presently touring Rhodesia,*

please contact the nearest BSAP station, as her husband is critically ill,' it told Chris he was compromised . . . the Zambians were looking for him and he was to extricate immediately, avoiding conventional means of exit. If he could, he would make his way south to the Zambezi River and stay between two pre-determined points, which would be overflown at 12h00 daily by an aircraft looking out for him. The flights would continue daily until either he was rescued, or we had received news confirming his arrest by the Zambians.

If, on the other hand, the message used *Mr. Broadbent* instead of *Mrs. Glenda Green,* it signified he was in no danger, but he was to leave Zambia urgently using regular points of entry, as he was needed back in Rhodesia urgently.

Things did suddenly start to happen back in Rhodesia, and I needed him back urgently, as he was the only man fully *au fait* with the ZIPRA situation in Lusaka . . . and . . . we had made an important capture, and Special Branch needed Chris around so they could test the truth of some of the statements he was making.

Besides this, but just as important, public feeling in Rhodesia against Joshua Nkomo for the shooting down by ZIPRA with a Soviet supplied SAM-7 surface-to-air missile, on his instructions, of the Air Rhodesia Viscount civilian airliner, VP-WAS, a civilian scheduled flight from Kariba to Salisbury, and the bayoneting or shooting afterwards of ten survivors, including some children little more than babies, had justifiably risen to white heat.

Imagine shooting a missile at a civilian flight anyway . . . forget it was in Rhodesia . . . it could have been the flight from London to Manchester . . . or the evening flight from New York to Philadelphia . . . or from Sydney to Brisbane . . . or from Paris to Brussels . . . or from Johannesburg to Durban.

Take your imagination further . . . the sign above your seat: *Fasten seat belts/No smoking,* which is glowing redly flicks off. The two children, one perhaps five and the other six, who had been giving their grandmother such a hard time on the short holiday, settled down, their putty noses pressed to the window gazing at the ground below in the fading light.

A Russian supplied, shoulder-fired by ZIPRA, SAM-7 heat-seeking missile streaked upwards towards the Viscount as eagerly as metal filings drawn to a magnet.

The pilot of the Viscount was not at war . . . his passengers, be they black, white or yellow, as they were, or Rhodesians, British, Americans or French, as they were, were not belligerents at war either. The Viscount was not a French Mirage fighter, neither was it a U.S. Phantom, or one of the incredible F.16's, nor was it a Harrier jump jet or even one of the old English Electric Canberras which had first caused thousands of necks to crane incredulously by its high, although now pathetic, speed of climb on its first public appearance at the British Farnborough Air Show in 1951.

If the Viscount had been one of those aircraft, it would have been equipped with sophisticated equipment to enable it to multiply its image electronically to fight off the missile's cold and technical blood-hound-like instincts . . . but the Viscount was not a war-plane . . . it was a civilian aeroplane . . . an ageing civilian aeroplane, loaded with holiday-makers.

The missile struck home and tore off an engine and the Viscount inclined into a shallow dive while the pilot fought the controls. The passengers panicked . . . there were screams, shouts and people crying. One man, not strapped in, tried to climb the uphill passage between the seats, all the while appealing to people not to panic.

With a skill which showed him to be a master indeed, the Captain straightened the stricken aircraft and brought it in to land at the only open field in the landscape below . . . but he could not see the large ditch in the centre. The aircraft might have survived, but the ditch killed it . . . she broke up, and thirty of the fifty eight passengers died in the rending steel and white-hot flames which followed.

From the tail-section, eighteen dazed passengers, many crushed and with their limbs broken, crawled or were dragged to the relative safety of the African bush. They had survived . . . they had dropped from thousands of feet, and after hitting the ground, had still lived . . . it had to be God's will.

Eight people went off to seek help . . . ten, including the desperately wounded and the young children stayed behind . . . the tots who had caused their grandmother such anxiety were among them.

Then, ZIPRA eagerly came with their guns and bayonets . . . they shot, stabbed and killed those poor people . . . people who had already survived an air crash . . . the ultimate of all horrors.

Joshua Nkomo, when interviewed on the radio, cackled in satisfaction and described the babies and other passengers he, his men and their Russian allies had murdered mercilessly, as legitimate *military* targets.

Dr. Callistus Ndhlovu, the ZAPU/ZIPRA representative at the United Nations, admitted too that ZIPRA had murdered the survivors . . . except he did not call it murder.

The clear truth was the shooting down and subsequent slaughtering of the survivors was a cold bloodedly executed pre-plan for which Nkomo and his ZIPRA officers not only claimed responsibility . . . but claimed credit too.

In Cape Town, the Friends of Rhodesia Society posted a reward of one hundred thousand rand, payable to anyone who got Nkomo back to Rhodesia to stand trial.

Com-Ops too wanted him dead . . . and . . . they asked us to kill him. It was only a pleasure . . . and the best task offered to us for a long time. For we . . . like most Rhodesians . . . wanted to see him dead as well.

We had a security concern . . . I and most other Selous Scouts had come to believe there was a leak at Com-Ops, or in high places, which was getting back to the terrorists in Zambia and Mozambique. I had always been astounded at the great numbers of hangers-on who had started to unnecessarily appear at briefings for special force operations, including civilian civil servants who would not, I would have thought, needed to have been there at all. I often thought wistfully back to the tight security we had in the early days of the Selous Scouts, when the only man who knew what mischief we were up to, was General Walls . . . and only General Walls.

After the initial markedly successful strikes against terrorist camps by all arms of the Rhodesian Security Forces, the enemy had suddenly become ultra-conspicuous by their absence, when attacks against their camps were mounted.

Some of this could be explained away. The terrorists, both ZIPRA and ZANLA, had taken a considerable number of painful batterings which had cost them dearly. Consequently, instead of keeping their terrorists in big concentrations, where they were relatively easy to take out by air or ground strikes, they spread them out in penny packets over large areas . . . sometimes as much as thirty square kilometres.

They had also learned that inattention to aircraft could cost them dearly. They had no air support themselves, so aircraft sounds, no matter how distant, meant either they were to be the target of some immaculate bombing by the Rhodesian Air Force, or that troops were on the way . . . or, at the least . . . a reconnaissance team was lurking around spying on them from the bush nearby.

Superstitions in Africa have little changed in a hundred years, and the terrorists kept spirit mediums or witchdoctors with them to study the omens in the same way that Mzilikazi did when doctoring his impis for their annual warring expeditions against neighbouring tribes. Then, as now, the spirit mediums and witchdoctors made very sure, for instance, that before predicting the end of a drought . . . which if they were wrong might mean their execution . . . they kept asking for additional *muti* with which to cast their spells, and that *muti* they asked for took considerable time to obtain . . . like, until their big toes started to ache as rainclouds appeared in the sky!

So it was with the ZANLA and ZIPRA spirit mediums, who spent more time cocking their ears to the wind for aero engine sounds, than they did communing with the spirits to find out when the Rhodesians would come. During operation *Miracle,* towards the end of the war, some pet baboons which had been with ZANLA and were captured, were found to be ultra sensitive to aircraft sounds . . . they chuntered and pranced around for ten minutes, before any human ear detected even the most distant murmurs of approaching aircraft.

Nevertheless, becoming uncomfortably aware that there could, in all possibility, be a traitor at Com-Ops who had sold out to the enemy, I cut the contents of my weekly briefings to a bare minimum, leaving only the bones of our activities to be seen, and keeping the flesh suffering clearly from malnutrition . . . leaving out entirely, anything which could endanger the lives of my men.

When I sent Chris into Zambia the first time, I told General Walls of my suspicions . . . he didn't comment, but he didn't deny the possibility.

Indeed, it would have been foolish to have done so. The British Intelligence services are very good . . . the best in the world . . . and they are well used to ruthlessly manipulating peoples . . . even kith and kin . . . it kept them in control of a large Empire for two hundred years, and even now helps to keep the balance of power in their favour. In World War-2 British Intelligence penetrated German war secrets so often, and so effectively, that Churchill often knew about things happening in Germany before Hitler did. It follows then that we could have held few secrets from the British . . . half our population were either born in the United Kingdom, or still had blood ties there.

Someone once said that in her decolonisation programmes, so far as it adversely affected British settlers, Britain, who once ruled the waves had now waived the rules, but this is a blatant misrepresentation . . . for Britain sanctimoniously, never considered she had any rules to abide by in the first place.

I strongly urged General Walls that, as far as the Zambian exercise was concerned, at least, we return to the procedure where I briefed only him. He agreed in principle, but mentioned, he would have to keep, at least some, of the Com-Ops' staff in the picture.

The Com-Ops' Brigadier when he tasked us to assassinate Joshua Nkomo, was not terribly impressed when I said I considered the operation as feasible but, in the interests of security, I didn't intend to brief either him or anyone else at Com-Ops with the plan details, because I did not trust Com-Ops' security. The only detail I was prepared to give, I said, was that I was going to send a Scout into Zambia who would attempt to kill Nkomo.

I advised him I had already discussed this aspect with General Walls who had cleared it. Although not overly pleased, the Brigadier accepted the situation and thereafter left the Selous Scouts alone to get on with the job. All he insisted upon, and I had no quarrel with that, was that our plan be expeditiously formulated and that Joshua Nkomo be killed as soon as possible.

Even in normal run-of-the-mill operations I always rigidly adhered to the security principle of *need to know.* Was a man's knowledge of a particular operation vital to the success of it? If it wasn't . . . all knowledge was kept from him . . . no matter *who* he was.

Tight security in the Selous Scouts was a way of life.

It was unusual, from a security point of view, for me to have even considered recalling Chris from Zambia to meet and brief someone else being sent in . . . but the circumstances were unusual . . . and the urgency dictated by Com-Ops, and the circumstances, meant the assassination mission had top priority over all other operations, and the man tasked to do the job had to be comprehensively briefed . . . and . . . only Chris could do that.

I selected Lieutenant Anthony White, sent for him and outlined what I had in mind . . . and the risks involved.

I gave him the, by now customary, day or so to think about the dangers before he committed himself, but he declined and insisted on accepting the job immediately.

Killing a man is easy . . . the human form is delicate and vulnerable . . . and there are a wide variety of murderous means from which to make a choice. But, when one wishes to kill and at the same time preserve the assassin's safety and identity and, just as importantly, ensure no evidence is left behind to enable the blame to be firmly laid on the doorstep of the country responsible, then a whole kaleidoscope of brand new problems arise.

An African was clearly the best choice to carry out a task in an African country . . . his colour made it easy for him to merge with the locals.

But, as stressed before, time was of the essence and we had little enough of this precious

commodity available to us as it was, without spending an inordinate time on the detailed and specialist training necessary before infiltration ... besides that, only very few of our African Scouts had ever travelled outside the borders of Rhodesia, except on operations, and consequently knew little or nothing of even the basic border post formalities.

So, we had to settle on a European Scout to carry out the assassination.

While waiting for Chris to get out of Zambia, we got down to planning the best method of killing Nkomo and how the assassination should be carried out. Knowledge of the operation was restricted, on a need to know basis, to a very bare minimum number of Selous Scouts. Anthony White's controller was to be Captain Peter Stanton, a seasoned and fine Special Branch officer who had been involved in the early days of the Scouts. He had resigned from the Police and joined the Army, after a short spell of civilian life had shown him it was not to his liking. Special Branch's loss was the Selous Scouts' gain.

We considered and rejected many assassination methods, until settling finally on a radio activated car-bomb.

A suitable car, a type which Central Intelligence Organisation thought at the time was common in Zambia (it wasn't), a Ford Escort saloon, was bought in South Africa and clandestinely taken to a *safe* house in the suburbs of Salisbury, where our explosives wizard, Captain Charlie Small and our Australian signals' technician, a genius of exceptional technical ability, together got down to converting it into an enormous claymore mine. To make things difficult, it was realised it would probably be subjected to customs examination, so all visible evidence of conversion had to be concealed.

They removed the doors and stripped them down. Charlie Small, after much careful work with his calculator, cast charges from a stable explosive so they fitted precisely into the doors without being apparent or interfering with the window or door mechanisms. Cordex ... instantaneous explosive cord ... positioned to resemble car wiring was connected to the charges and to the initiator. In the boot they fitted a device, initiatable by a radio impulse, and connected to an ordinary car radio aerial which enabled it to receive the command signal from a distance of up to two kilometres in open countryside or, because of interference, five hundred metres in built-up areas. The device which transmitted the detonation command, was a popular make of transistor radio, which although adapted, still functioned as a radio.

Two methods of ensuring the timing of the detonation was to best advantage were suggested. The first was for Anthony to take on a black Zambian driver and get him, on some pretext, to drive up next to the car containing Joshua Nkomo. On coming level, he would blink his indicators as a signal, upon which, Anthony, who would be following some three hundred metres behind, would initiate the detonation and escape in the confusion of the aftermath of the blast, which would inevitably result.

The callous advantages of this method were that firstly, by ensuring the remains of an African were discovered in the wreckage, it would create speculation as to who had sent him to do the job? ZANLA? The Rhodesians? The Zambians? A whole range of possibilities would be opened for conjecture. Secondly, the unfortunate driver could, unwitting as he would be to the consequences of his actions, ensure that Nkomo was precisely opposite him when he blinked the indicators and signalled his own immediate decease.

The main difficulty would be to find and then cultivate a suitable Zambian African into accepting a believable cover story, so he could be persuaded to do the job.

The second best method we decided, was to pre-position the Escort along a route commonly used by Nkomo each morning, when driving to his office. The trouble was that Anthony would have great difficulty in judging exactly when Nkomo's car was in the best position to detonate. He would also have to appear natural and have a valid reason to hand for loitering in the street if he was challenged. This would not be easy, for a European stood out in Lusaka much more than an African. He also stood in secondary danger of being caught by the force of the blast or injured by flying fragments.

Whichever method he finally used, he was still to stay in Zambia for a few days after the job

had been done, so that things would settle down before he took a normal scheduled flight out of the country.

Thinking up a cover story for him gave us a few headaches, for the closer a man is to his cover, the safer he is. For example, if he is to pose as an accountant, he must have a thorough knowledge of accountancy, and so on.

Then, we remembered that Anthony was a skilled taxidermist ... which he practised as a hobby in his spare time. This, coupled with the wealth of knowledge on bushcraft and wild animals he had gained while chief instructor at the Kariba tracking school, decided us to have him pose as a taxidermist from Kenya ... a man surveying the business potential of taxidermy in Zambia.

Forged papers *signed* by the Kenyan Minister of Lands and Wildlife, introducing him, were soon produced with a flourish by the Central Intelligence Organisation, together with a British passport showing an assumed name.

A lot of time was then devoted by our Special Branch officers in putting him through his paces. Peter Stanton, his controller, continually contrived difficult and tricky situations for him to talk his way out of.

We originally intended to start his more recent journeying in England, but time was our enemy, so we re-scheduled him to start in Kenya, where he would live for two weeks before flying out to Malawi, and then on to Zambia.

Chris meanwhile, had arrived home safely after using a circuitous route back, switching passports in Malawi, so his Zambian passport did not show any inexplicable stamps.

He was given no information about Anthony's mission, but I knew that from the volume and particular angle of the questions asked of him during his debrief, he must have gained a shrewd idea of what was afoot. It took days, but he was finally systematically soaked of every scrap of information which might aid Anthony's mission.

Once ready, Special Branch kitted Anthony out from head to toe in British made clothing, and he flew out to Kenya.

The time had arrived to get the Ford Escort car-bomb to Lusaka, yet, despite misgivings, the exercise proved surprisingly easy. Chief Superintendent Mac McGuiness produced an African volunteer who was not only willing to take it, but also had the right passport. He took it over and drove it through Botswana to Zambia and delivered it to Anthony in Lusaka, who had flown from Kenya via Johannesburg on the 10th December.

Some days before, he had experienced a heart lurching surprise when he was paid an unexpected visit at his hotel by the Zambian Special Branch, who closely questioned him on his bona fides.

The place chosen to rendezvous with Mac McGuiness's courier to take over the car had not been a good choice. The arrangement had been for him to go there at 19h00 nightly until contact was made. Unfortunately, a nearby building was guarded by an alert security guard who noticed Anthony's nightly walks and, as Europeans seldom walked alone at night in Lusaka because of the danger of muggings, he had passed a report to the Zambian Special Branch.

Anthony was able to explain things satisfactorily, but he was left with no option but to continue going to the rendezvous each evening, otherwise he would never get possession of the Ford Escort. To overcome the danger of the vigilant security guard reporting him again, he maintained watch on the rendezvous from a distance, and after an anxious four days, he was rewarded when the contact arrived and handed the car keys over to him.

After this, he set out to conduct a series of detailed reconnaissances of Nkomo's Lusaka house which was close against President Kaunda's State House, and well guarded, not only by armed ZIPRA sentries within the grounds, but also by teenage gangs of the Zambian Youth Wing, who wandered the streets outside State House accosting anyone who walked in the vicinity.

In spite of the difficulties, Anthony made a comprehensive study of timings and the routes taken by Nkomo daily, which showed a random variation from day to day.

He had by this time, accepted that it was too dangerous and also impractical to employ a Zambian to drive the car close to Nkomo, and so had settled for the second method.

But luck was not with him, and although he re-positioned the car seven times, two of the positionings being right in the centre of Lusaka, Joshua Nkomo used a different route each time, and Anthony, who had rapidly become a past-master in the art of loitering, missed him every time.

Anthony began to get desperate, as did I too, sitting back at Andre Rabie Barracks waiting for the bomb to go off. At one stage he seriously considered blasting him with a shotgun at point blank range from his car window, but this was impossible without risking capture, for he had no driver to assist with the getaway.

A shotgun, incidentally, had been taped behind a removable panel inside the Ford Escort, along with other assorted but useful equipment.

To bedevil him further, his money started to run out . . . a problem that was to haunt us constantly throughout our Zambian spy ring days.

For some inexplicable, but probably for easily explainable bureaucratic reasons, the Central Intelligence Organisation habitually underestimated the cost of living in Zambia, and supplied insufficient funds to our operators, seeing that to run out of money there would be courting disaster. A hotel guest was compelled by law to pay a certain percentage of his bill periodically on demand, and failure to do so, meant a certain call to the Police.

I had despatched our Signals' Officer, Hamish Leyton, to Johannesburg, to live with a private family from where he could act as Anthony's liaison man. If Anthony had problems, he could by veiled speech and coded phrases, pass a message through to Hamish, who would telephone me at Inkomo. It was simple, but as is often the case with simple systems, most effective, the only problem being that Hamish had to remain almost next to the phone for twenty four hours a day awaiting Anthony's calls.

He went to Johannesburg expecting to stay for ten days, and ended up staying for six months.

As soon as I heard via Hamish that Anthony's money situation was critical, I told Chief Superintendent Mac McGuiness, who arranged money from his own resources . . . but, for some reason it never reached Zambia. Eventually, as things became increasingly difficult for Anthony, and no one did anything to give him financial relief I did something I had never wanted or dreamed I would have to do, and on 2nd December, I sent Chris Grove to Zambia to take cash to Anthony. It reached him only in the nick of time to stop the hotel from calling the Police.

Once there, Chris, who by then had the promise of employment with a safari firm, stayed on to continue with his own reconnaissance tasks.

For obvious reasons of security his instructions were to make no further contact with, and to keep well away from Anthony.

As time progressed things became more dangerous for Anthony in Zambia . . . the longer he stayed the more likely it was that someone . . . the Zambian Special Branch . . . would notice and maybe arrest him. This task should only have taken a short time . . . it should never have been so protracted, as the elusiveness of the target had made it.

Nkomo was very slippery and often took unannounced trips overseas which brought enforced inactivity onto Anthony, who was forced to hang about twiddling his thumbs, ever conscious of his mobile claymore parked outside the hotel. To make things more difficult, Nkomo never followed a set routine, and whenever Anthony was certain he was going to take a certain route and had readied the car accordingly, Nkomo would always go another way.

Every day he played this desperate game of chess, trying to get Nkomo, the ZIPRA king, into a position where he could be checkmated by the car-bomb, but everytime he failed, whether it was by luck or by intelligent anticipation based on information from the Soviet or British Intelligence pieces, also on the chessboard, we were never to find out.

The crunch finally came on the night of the 20th of January, after Anthony had concluded a spell of surveillance on Nkomo's house. As he made his way from the area, he was waylaid by a gang of young thugs of the Zambian Youth Wing, who set about him and administered a severe beating up . . . a broken nose was his worst, but by no means his only injury.

After painfully staggering back to his hotel room and after self administering first aid . . . he

could hardly go to hospital for treatment . . . he spent a sleepless night weighing up his chances of remaining undetected, finally concluding they were pretty slim. He had been seen around far too long by far too many different people and at far too many places which, if put together, would make a clear and totally compromising pattern.

It was doubtful too if his recent assailants would see anything unlawful in having beaten him up . . . they would see no shame in telling the Zambian Special Branch how they had bashed up a white man in a particular area. Like the Nazi Youth Wing thugs of a previous decade in Europe, the Zambian Youth Wing also had their own twisted set of values. The Zambian Special Branch would certainly put two and two together and seek him out for arrest. If they did, he knew with certainty, he'd not be able to talk his way out of things a second time. He had to get out of Zambia . . . and quickly . . . before they came looking for him again . . . they were likely already looking . . . so regular road routes out or commercial airline flights were too chancy.

He had an emergency extrication drill to be followed in the event of compromise. He was an expert bushman and, like all such men, he preferred that friendly environment to the town when in peril. His drill called for him to walk eighty kilometres to an easily recognisable bend in the Kafue powerline which, every day while he was in Zambia, would be overflown at 12h00 by a fixed wing aircraft keeping a look-out for him.

To protect the helicopter pilot who would later have to come in to uplift him, it was arranged that if he was not compromised he would stand below the powerline with his shirt off. If he was a prisoner and had revealed the rendezvous under torture to guards who were concealed in ambush nearby, he would keep his shirt on. In either instance an air strike would first be put in nearby him before any attempt was made to uplift him. If, unknown to him, he had been under enemy observation, this should put the enemy off their stride and, if he were a prisoner, it might enable him to escape in the confusion brought about by the attack. If that happened, then once he had shaken off his pursuers, he would make his way to a point north of the Kariba Dam which would then also be overflown by the Air Force for ten days at 12h00 daily.

He was unable to get through to Hamish Leyton in Johannesburg to warn of his pending action, so the first indication we would have that he was in trouble and was using the escape emergency route out, would be the lack of contact with Hamish for a period of three days.

Having made the decision, he bought provisions and set off to hike through the bush for his emergency rendezvous. Apart from a knife, his only weapon for defence was a small metal pipe which could be screwed to a breech block to make a very crude .22 pistol . . . to kill with it though, it would have had to be held against a person's head and triggered like a humane-killer.

After walking some forty kilometres, he started to suffer from griping attacks of dysentery and a high temperature. He rapidly lost strength and soon was scarcely able to walk above a stumble.

Then, his vigilance lowered by his sickness, he found himself confronted by an armed African poacher who was as thoroughly shaken, to find a European on his own in the bush, as Anthony was to find him.

Appreciating immediately that Anthony was up to no good, he attempted to capture him. Anthony, in spite of his weakened state, knew his life was in the balance so he ferociously turned on the poacher and killed him.

He was in a quandary as he had no tools with which to bury the body and its early discovery would surely initiate a widespread manhunt by Zambian troops based in the area; also, drained by the effects of the illness and bruised by the fight, he knew he was in no fit state to carry on anyway . . . the only sensible thing to do was to take his chances and return to Lusaka. It was either that or dying out in the bush.

After a nightmare march he got back to Lusaka, half expecting the Police to be waiting for him. Yet incredibly, things were quiet . . . no one was looking for him. He slept, then after cleaning himself up he bought medicine to treat his dysentery. As soon as he felt a little better, he drove the Ford Escort to a deserted area of bush outside of town and dumped it, after first disconnecting the radio detonator and removing the number plates, breaking them into pieces and

throwing them into the bush. The engine and chassis numbers presented no problems, as they had already been ground-off in Rhodesia and fictitious ones substituted.

Leaving the car set with a three hour delay fuse, at which time it would catch fire and incinerate, he returned and checked out of his hotel after paying the bill, and caught a bus to Lusaka airport.

Steeling himself, to calm the thumping of his heart, he presented his passport to the immigration officer who merely stamped it, after a cursory glance, and nodded for him to pass on through to the departure lounge. He sat there in a cold sweat, caused by fear as well as sickness, until the passengers were called to board the British Airways flight to Johannesburg, which was about to depart.

It was nearly the end of January, 1979 . . . he had been in Zambia occupied on his abortive task for almost five weeks.

I gave Com-Ops a full debrief on Anthony White's mission. They ordered me to try again . . . they still wanted Nkomo dead.

I went into consultation with Chief Superintendent Mac McGuiness. He was all for putting another Scout into Zambia and carrying on where we had left off, but this time, he suggested, we should send black Scouts to accompany him. With hindsight, there is little doubt in my mind that Anthony White would have succeeded in assassinating Nkomo, had he been given the help of an African Scout.

I disagreed with Mac's thinking, although I agreed the method adopted by Anthony White was probably correct in the circumstances . . . the trouble was, we were running out of time.

This was perhaps another example of the vast difference between the thinking of an Army and a Special Branch Policeman. Time, to the Special Branch man, is of no real consequence. He is accustomed to disappointments, which happen frequently in Police work, and he accepts failures or setbacks philosophically and simply tries again. And, in his sphere of work, this attitude of mind is undoubtedly the correct one.

But, a soldier, by nature, has a totally different approach. His training teaches him that in war, time is the most precious commodity he has . . . on the battlefield no soldier has ever had enough time. This is why soldiers become sticklers for punctuality, and why all their plans involve intricate timings.

The problem was, we in the Selous Scouts often suffered from conflicting identities: not only were we occasionally unsure if we were ZIPRA or ZANLA, Zambian Army, Botswana Defence Force or FRELIMO, fish or fowl – or sometimes even if we were Arthur or Martha for that matter – we were also more often unsure if we were Army or Special Branch. Eventually, by force of necessity, we adjusted our attitudes to incorporate both the Military and the Police approaches to things, and so became a fairly satisfactory hybrid of both.

In the case of Nkomo's proposed demise, there was no doubt in my mind that as Com-Ops demanded the job be carried out with urgency, we had to adopt the military approach.

My proposal to Mac was that we infiltrate another European Scout into Zambia, but this time his task be restricted to surveillance. Then, when the time and the information was right, we would launch a conventional military assault on the target's house, while he was in residence, and kill him.

After some discussion Mac agreed with reluctance to my proposal, but I realised it went completely against the grain for him.

The broad plan finally formulated was simple, but we both felt it stood a good chance of success. The Selous Scout spy, would as I had put forward, restrict his activities to surveillance of the target himself, the target's residence and the general area around it, so he would be in a position to pass back the word for the killing operation to be mounted when the circumstances were propitious. He had the additional responsibility of locating a suitable landing-zone from where he and the attack party would be uplifted after the assault.

Anthony White immediately volunteered to return, but we could not take the chance as we were unsure if the Zambian Special Branch were onto him.

Chris Grove, meanwhile, was in the process of commencing employment with a safari firm in Zambia, and being well established, he was far too valuable for us to allow him to be compromised in the assassination exercise.

I pondered the problem of who I should send for many long hours, selecting and rejecting men for many and varied reasons. I needed a very special man with a very special temperament . . . a self-contained loner probably. I had many men like that, but . . .

Suddenly it came to me . . .

Towards the end of 1978, I had been approached by a very unusual man who wanted a commission in the Selous Scouts . . . Martin Broadman.

Martin was unusual certainly . . . in many ways. In the first place he was a former Flight Lieutenant in the Rhodesian Air Force, in which he had served as a helicopter pilot for three years, having completed his contract in July, 1978. During those three years he had gained a well deserved reputation for ice-cool bravery, and when working with Fireforces was remembered for the times when he had taken his troooploads and dropped them right into central contact areas, often collecting large doses of flak in the process. He had also been awarded a well-deserved Silver Cross of Rhodesia for bravery, before trading his Air Force blue uniform for a civilian suit once again.

He had just completed his course at the School of Infantry where he had performed very well, having beaten many experienced regular Army officers in the process. He was then at Inkomo waiting to go on the next Selous Scouts' selection course.

I discussed my choice with Mac and he agreed that Martin would be ideal as an agent. There was a snag . . . his photograph had appeared in *Contact*, a book dealing with the war. Anyway, nobody could be totally ideal and to my mind this disadvantage was outweighed by the advantages of character he offered.

I sent for him, wryly remembering as I did, that he had said on his initial interview he wanted interesting and exciting work . . . he abhored the idea of a humdrum existence. I wondered if he would consider what I had in mind for him as humdrum.

I did not beat about the bush or try to minimise the dangers.

I gave him the same blunt admonitions I had given Chris Grove and Anthony White. I would not allow him to answer immediately, but insisted he go away and give the matter mature consideration.

Martin came back bright and early the next morning, as I had known he would . . . he wanted the job.

'And your photograph in *Contact*?'

He had thought that one out already.

The photograph in the book had been taken side view, while he was wearing a uniform cap . . . it was not a terribly good likeness either.

He stroked his moustache thoughtfully. 'If I shave this off, Sir, they will never recognise me,'

We looked at each other in silence for a few moments while thoughts raced through my head. What if a European from Zambia who had been passing through Rhodesia recognised him? The job should take two weeks . . . three at the most . . . it could be a lot less. I made the decision feeling slightly and inexplicably uneasy as I did so. Martin would have to go . . . the risk involved was justified.

I then sent for Richard Pomford and offered him command of the assault force. Richard, like Nelson, had only one good eye, and this widened considerably when I outlined the mission, but he accepted the command with alacrity.

I allowed him a team of eight men which had to include at least three African members of the Selous Scouts.

He wasted no time and selected his men including, much to his delight, Anthony White, which gave him a team-member with first-hand knowledge of the target's house. A very useful acquisition for that type of operation.

Training then commenced in earnest. Working from a blown-up photograph of Nkomo's

house and its environs, obtained by the courtesy of the Air Force photographic interpreters, and a street map of Lusaka, we set out to construct a facsimile of the house, and the access roads, which we marked out in a remote corner of Inkomo camp. A reasonable mock-up of the house was constructed out of old doors, windows and large quantities of hessian. The access roads were authentically carved out of the veld with the helpful use of a grader we had borrowed on extended loan from President Samora Machel and his FRELIMO, during operation *Virile* in Mozambique.

It was to be a night strike because we had already firmly established that Nkomo, once at home, very seldom went out again at night. If he was away when night fell, he invariably spent the night at the home of the person he was visiting.

Hamish Leyton was to return to Johannesburg to man the telephone once again to act as contactman between Martin in Lusaka and my personal telephone in my office next to the Inkomo operations room.

A code word . . . meaning Nkomo was in residence . . . would activate the operation.

Richard and his team, who would be on constant standby with two helicopters, would immediately take off, hopefully in the late afternoon to allow the helicopters to get back to Rhodesia before dark, and be dropped off at a point inside Zambia, which had been photographed and inspected by air reconnaissance – and was known to be devoid of human habitation. From there they would march twelve kilometres to rendezvous with Martin who would be waiting for them. This rendezvous point still had to be reconnoitred and checked for suitability by Martin.

After linking up with Martin, Richard and his men would be transported by his Land-Rover into Lusaka.

After driving past Nkomo's house, two African Scouts carrying special charges, would be dropped off at one end of the street, while the vehicle would carry on and park out of sight under the trees at the far end.

The white team members, all with their faces blackened and disguised as Zambian soldiers, would stay concealed in the truck while the two African Scouts with the special charges, crawled along a deep drainage ditch running parallel to the road, until they reached the security fence of Nkomo's house. To this they would attach their charges, which after crawling out of range, they would detonate by radio impulse.

As soon as the charges exploded, hopefully destroying a large section of the fence, the Land-Rover would approach at speed and the remaining Scouts would debus and rush the breached fence.

Two Scouts, carrying Russian RPD-light machineguns, would dash straight for the rear of the house and cover all the rear exits with gunfire. Two others would move around the house and systematically fire RPG-7 rockets into each room, commencing with Nkomo's bedroom. The job of the remaining four Scouts would be to take out the ZIPRA guards external to the house.

The RPG-7 gunners, after blasting each room with rockets, would take another turn around the house, lobbing bunker bombs and phosphorus grenades into each room, taking cover at the base of the windows as the explosions occurred. This was to be the *coup de grace* in the unlikely event that any of the occupants had managed to survive.

The team, having ensured beyond all reasonable doubt that Nkomo was dead, would embus, drive to a pre-selected spot south east of Lusaka, and destroy the Land-Rover with explosives. Afterwards, they would march by compass to the bush pick-up point for uplift by helicopter soon after first light.

A Hawker Hunter fighter bomber would escort the helicopters and fight off the opposition in the unlikely event the Zambian Air Force, alerted by their brand-new out-of-the box British-supplied radar system, attempted to intervene.

Hamish Leyton duly returned to Johannesburg to man the telephone as planned.

Then, a Land-Rover, its registration particulars having been suitably *rearranged* so that it could not be traced, was organised by Mac McGuiness.

Two small very high frequency radios were set in concealment behind panels by our technicians, while a large high frequency radio was hidden in a false petrol tank. Martin Broadman, equipped with a British passport freshly laundered clean, would enter Zambia via Botswana and drive the doctored Land-Rover to Lusaka.

His cover would be that of a tourist interested in settling in Zambia . . . if he found a job to his liking.

The moment Martin crossed the border into Zambia, Richard Pomford and his team would be placed on permanent standby.

Once Martin was able to ascertain Nkomo was at home for an evening, he would phone Hamish Leyton in Johannesburg and pass him the code word. Hamish would immediately phone me. I would set the operation in motion.

Few plans ever work perfectly, no matter how careful and detailed the planning, and this was to prove no exception.

The first snag encountered was when Martin's Land-Rover, a used vehicle which had been thoroughly checked in our workshops, broke down in Francistown, Botswana. Martin managed to get it to a garage, but the mechanic who checked it, shrugged . . . the spares were going to take a long time . . . they had to come from Johannesburg.

Nothing daunted, Martin told Hamish what had happened, then boarded a civil aircraft and flew to Lusaka, leaving the Land-Rover in the care of the garage.

Hamish collected the vehicle, once it had been repaired, but we had lost confidence in it and were not satisfied the fault would not recur. So, Chief Superintendent Mac McGuiness, organised the purchase of another vehicle, this time a Toyota Land-Cruiser.

Once again our mechanics worked their magic, cunningly concealing another set of radios. Once this had been done it was sent with an African driver, supplied by Mac McGuiness, with instructions to deliver it to Martin in Lusaka . . . but luck was still not with us.

On arrival at the Kazungula Ferry Border Post, it so happened that the Zambian Inspector of Customs was carrying out an inspection. He picked on the Toyota at random, as an example to his subordinates, much to the consternation of the driver. He gave it a very thorough going over, during which he noticed the spare petrol tank . . . containing the high frequency radio, was padlocked . . . he peremptorily ordered the driver to open it.

The driver stalled by saying he had mislaid the key. The zealous official immediately prepared to smash the lock, but the driver, desperately anxious, loudly and blusteringly remonstrated, insisting he be paid cash damages if the Customs Inspector persisted in damaging his vehicle. The Zambian obviously unsure of the legalities, changed his mind. Instead, he checked through the driver's papers with a fine-toothed comb, finally asking in triumph where his visa was and why his date of birth was not shown on his passport? The latter, of course, was a common occurrence with African travellers as many, quite genuinely, had no idea at all when they were born. The lack of a visa was a different matter though, so he was left with no alternative but to return to Francistown and report his failure to Hamish.

I flew down to Francistown to see Hamish, and after a worried discussion we removed the high frequency radio, filled the spare tank with petrol and sent the driver, who by then had his visa, back to Kazungula to try his luck again.

This time, as we had half anticipated would happen, there were no problems whatsoever. The Inspector of Customs had departed along with the improved efficiency. In his place were the usual tired and lethargic Zambian officials offering lackadaisical attention. In moments he was through and into Zambia.

Martin, consumed with impatience, had lost two weeks of valuable time but it had, at least, given him the opportunity to familiarise himself with Lusaka. However, once he had linked up with the driver and taken over the Land-Cruiser, he immediately set about locating a suitable place to rendezvous with Richard Pomford and his men.

Running east, south-east from Lusaka, is a road which leads to the Zambezi Valley, and it was along this road that we had chosen the provisional rendezvous. But, what neither Martin nor

OPERATION VIRILE: DESTROY BRIDGES BETWEEN DOMBE AND ESPUNGABERA: NOVEMBER/DECEMBER, 1977

C6. Virile – Soviet 12,7 MG mounted on roof of bus leading the column

C7. Virile – Stop to change a wheel – note ZANLA blue denim uniforms

C8. Virile – Soviet 14,5 AA gun on column vehicle

C9. Virile – The smoke haze of war

C10. Captain Chris (Schulie) Schollenberg, Selous Scouts, the first of only two Rhodesian soldiers to ever be awarded the Grand Cross of Valour, after receiving it from the President of Rhodesia, the Hon. John Wrathall, on the 16th June, 1978.

C11. The Selous Scout operator.

C12. An unusual event – the whole Regiment on parade. Rededication 17th February, 1979.

C13. A vital segment of the Selous Scouts' operation that the Rhodesian public never knew about or even suspected – the Special Branch of the British South Africa Police.

C14. OPERATION PETAL abduction of Elliot Sibanda by Selous Scouts from Botswana. Picture shows his Land-Rover. March/April 1979.

C15. OPERATION DICE another ZIPRA ammunition dump in Zambia destroyed. Late 1979.

C16. OPERATION DICE pick up in Zambia by Bell-205 helicopter. Late 1979.

ourselves had suspected, was that areas off this road had been declared a Military Reserve . . . this lack of knowledge nearly caused Martin to come to grief.

Having checked out the provisional rendezvous, which seemed okay, he decided to travel on a little further in case there was somewhere better.

Unexpectedly, he almost ploughed into a foot patrol of Zambian soldiers who, without ceremony, clapped him under arrest, and escorted him to a nearby Zambian Army border control camp, where they took him before their company commander, a Major.

Fortunately Martin, a passable artist, was carrying a sketch book, and upon being questioned by the Major, he apologised profusely saying he was unaware . . . which was not a lie . . . that he was in an out-of-bounds area. He posed as an English tourist with a passionate interest in sketching game.

The Major's eyebrows raised happily on hearing Martin was an Englishman, and he promptly invited him to tea.

To Martin's amused relief, he learned the Major was a Sandhurst graduate with an abiding love of the English and their ways.

They sat in cosy comfort on canvas collapsible chairs while a soldier served tea on a delicately laid tray.

'Milk?' enquired the Major.

'Oh, no, dear boy,' said Martin in the frightfully-frightful accent it had seemed politic to adopt. 'May I have lemon, please?'

The Major was crestfallen . . . he had no lemons. What's more, he had clearly failed his first hurdle as an ebony Englishman of the officer class. He immediately summoned an orderly in an effort to retrieve the position and sent him, at the double, to a farm several kilometres away to buy some lemons and restore the honour of the Zambian Army.

They chatted idly while waiting, the Major being most interested in Martin's artistry. After a short time, he shyly asked Martin if he would mind doing a drawing of him too.

Martin agreed with alacrity and soon charcoaled out a passable picture which delighted his new-found friend no end. An hour later, a panting orderly returned with a lemon, and they settled down to enjoy the ritual of English tea. Afterwards, he said good-bye and headed back to Lusaka, naturally having first found out the precise boundaries of the Military Reserve.

Not long after this, Martin too came up against money problems, although he was able to borrow from local sources, but he could not get enough to pay his hotel bill. The manager gave him short notice that if this state of affairs was not remedied forthwith, he would hand the matter over to the police.

I received urgent messages to this effect and immediately brought it to Mac's attention. Mac straight away set into motion arrangements for money to be passed to Martin via Central Intelligence Organisation sources, but as the days went by and still no money had arrived in Lusaka, Martin's situation became desperate. I saw Mac once more and made it clear that, as much as I disliked the idea, I had to send Chris Grove who was temporarily out of Zambia, back there with money for Martin. In the circumstances, Mac had no option but to reluctantly agree.

We had to take a calculated risk, a risk Chris was fully aware of, because it was improbable the hassles with Martin's hotel account had remained unnoticed by Zambian Special Branch . . . it was likely indeed, they already had Martin under observation. In the event, nothing happened. Chris passed over the money, debriefed Martin and returned to Rhodesia by the next available flight via Johannesburg.

Joshua Nkomo, as we might have expected, had suddenly left Zambia on one of those overseas tours of which he was so fond.

The operation was becoming protracted . . . alarmingly protracted . . . much more so than we had foreseen.

Then Nkomo returned and a matter of days afterwards, Hamish telephoned me from Johannesburg. There was no small talk. His message consisted of one terse word . . . Martin's code word . . . the operation was on.

I was with Richard and his team at a forward base near Karoi. The Scouts were conducting a highly successful high density operation to the north of Karoi at the time and, by keeping the team there, it had meant two extra helicopters being available for the Fireforce, should a strike call originate from our operators on the ground.

Within minutes almost, the team was airborne, and heading from there to the jump-off point on Rhodesia's northern border. After refuelling, the helicopters took off again and set course for Zambia's hostile interior, arriving at their drop-off point only a half hour before last light. The pilots, by necessity, had cut their timings razor-fine and they only just made it back to Rhodesia and safety before night fell.

There was nothing more those of us left in Rhodesia could do, except settle down by the radio, with our fingers firmly crossed, and await news.

At 19h00 . . . much too soon . . . the radio crackled into life, calling us.

It was Richard's callsign. I listened with forboding . . . it was bad news.

After landing the team had set off for the rendezvous, making maximum use of what was left of the fast fading light. They spread into an open formation while moving through an area of very thick bush.

When the light had almost gone they reached an open vlei . . . in the centre of the vlei ran a deep jagged *donga* – a gulley.

Sergeant Major Kandi was leading, and he moved to the left to cross the donga. Sergeant Mpoto who had not noticed his movement, was startled when Sergeant Major Kandi suddenly loomed up from the ground at his feet.

Used to acting instantly, he triggered his RPD-light machinegun and Kandi dropped with a bullet lodged in his body . . . another smashed his leg.

It was a major disaster for so small a team, but Richard told me he would carry on even with two men short . . . he was two men short because he had told a European Scout, Pat McIntosh, to remain behind and look after Kandi.

Richard, after giving me his hurried report and the map reference of Kandi and McIntosh's position, left them and pressed on to make rendezvous with Martin.

As Richard and the rest left, it started to rain gently, but this soon developed into a tropical downpour. Pat McIntosh, unhappy and soaking wet, had good reason to get even more worried . . . he couldn't find a vein in Kandi's arm in which to put the needle for a drip – a very bad sign.

Shock began setting in with a vengeance and the wounded man began shivering uncontrollably. In an effort to keep Kandi warm, Pat held him in his arms and cuddled him against his body.

In this manner they lay together, without benefit of shelter, totally drenched and cold, the rain lashing the undergrowth and trees about them.

'The Zambian Army will be looking for us tomorrow,' murmured Kandi in apparent semi-delirium.

'I suppose so,' Pat agreed. 'They won't find us though,' he said unconvincingly.

'If you hear the enemy coming close you must promise me something,' said Kandi earnestly.

'Of course,' said Pat unsuspectingly, 'anything . . . I'll get anything you want.'

'Shoot me,' said Kandi, 'then cut my heart out . . . get it back to Rhodesia and bury it in the area of my tribal home . . . this will stop my spirit becoming an *Ngozi* – a spirit in torment condemned to wander forever in limbo, because the family spirits have not been satisfied by a proper funeral carried out in accordance with tribal custom.'

Pat did not like the unexpected turn the conversation had taken, one little bit. The situation was bad enough as it was . . . without it being compounded by macabre last wishes.

Kandi hadn't quite finished though. 'You know that after they find my dead body, they will run very fast after you?'

'I guess I can only expect that,' agreed Pat morosely.

'Remember then,' continued Kandi helpfully, 'if you think they are going to catch you . . . then . . . shoot yourself too.'

Later in the night I received another message from Richard Pomford reporting his arrival at the rendezvous . . . Martin Broadman had not turned up.

I told him to base-up away from the rendezvous and stay hidden until I could find out what had happened to Martin. I didn't believe anything serious had happened . . . I reckoned it was likely Martin would pick him up the following night and I told Richard so.

At daylight I arranged a helicopter uplift for Sergeant Major Kandi and Pat McIntosh, which went off without a hitch, and soon Kandi was tucked up between the white sheets of a Rhodesian hospital bed.

At 12h00 Hamish 'phoned and said Martin had contacted him and reported the heavy rain had washed the two bridges away between Lusaka and the rendezvous . . . he had found it impossible to get through.

I had no option but to postpone and start from scratch with a new landing zone and a fresh rendezvous closer to Lusaka . . . where Martin would be able to get his Land-Cruiser through to.

I relayed this on to Martin through Hamish, then told Richard by radio to standby for pickup. The team was uplifted and returned to Karoi where I was waiting for them.

Richard and I rehashed the plan and passed the changes through Hamish to Martin, who was instructed to let us know when Nkomo was at home again.

Two days later, the code word was again received from Martin at the Inkomo operations room . . . again Richard and his men took off for Zambia.

This time Martin reached the rendezvous without difficulty, but the strikeforce encountered almost inpenetrable bush on route and, even by Herculean efforts, they only managed to reach the rendezvous by first light. Then something occurred which they had not dreamed of, for suddenly, the still morning air was split by the sounds of small-arms fire, followed by the thuds of heavy artillery firing some distance away.

A cautious reconnaissance showed they were in the centre of a Zambian Army brigade exercise. To make things worse, a patrol of Zambian soldiers appeared and spent a long time studying the tracks of the team which were imprinted clearly in the soft mud.

After some excited gesticulations at the discovery, a radio call was made and reinforcements arrived by truck and an immediate follow-up commenced.

I instructed Richard to pull back to a safe area and stand-by for a *hot extraction*, and they moved off fast, anti-tracking as best they could in the muddy conditions.

Later in the day, having outrun and shaken off the pursuing Zambians, they were picked up by helicopters and flown back to Karoi.

Then, just to add to our woes, Martin again reported the target had left Zambia unexpectedly on an undisclosed mission.

Martin, once again, found himself short of money.

The Zambian soldiers, surprisingly enough, made no mention of tracks or of the presence of unidentified persons in their area on the Army radio net, which was one hundred per cent intercepted, so we assumed they had dismissed the tracks as being those of other soldiers on the same exercise.

'Ishe,' Kandi announced when I visited him in hospital, 'Nkomo has powerful *muti* – medicine . . . it is contained in his walking stick. Every day he speaks to the stick and it tells him the safe routes he must follow during the day to stay alive. That's why Lieutenant White couldn't kill him either. If you want to kill him, I urge you to first get his walking stick.'

We had certainly never before experienced such an incredible run of bad luck, so it was hardly surprising it was gnawing at the morale of the Africans who are very superstitious people. Perhaps, if I had been an African, I might too have believed in the magic of his walking stick.

I decided it was time to get back to basics and told Hamish to instruct Martin to fly to Johannesburg and meet Richard Pomford, so they could have joint discussions. We had thrashed out a new plan, but I felt it essential we have Martin's views on it.

Richard flew to Johannesburg and after discussions with Martin, they finalised the new plan. He was also able to replenish Martin's money supply, but not by very much, as Richard had only

been given a meagre amount by the Central Intelligence Organisation.

The latest plan called for the team to enter by parachute and, looking at things in retrospect, I am sure that if we had adopted this method from the outset, Joshua Nkomo would today have been a dead man. The plan otherwise remained basically the same, except the approach march was dispensed with, as the parachute drop would take place two hundred metres from the rendezvous with Martin. The main merit of this . . . other than avoiding the mud and the thick bush . . . was that Martin would guide the aircraft in and give the final word by a radio . . . and, if the target had moved from his house at the last minute, he would still be able to radio an abort signal before the drop occurred.

We arranged that if he called for an abort, the aircraft would alter course and overfly some known ZIPRA camps and drop propaganda leaflets, advising the terrorists to give up the fight and surrender before we killed them.

The aircraft's flight pattern, we felt sure, would be monitored by Lusaka's British radar and this would provide good camouflage for the operation. It certainly gave us a lot more flexibility, as we could make false starts to the exercise every night, if necessary, without us giving the game away.

Unfortunately, Nkomo having returned, suddenly caught an aircraft and disappeared overseas.

On 29th March, during the evening, Martin again transmitted the code-word from Lusaka . . . Nkomo was home again.

I alerted Richard Pomford, and his team took off from the Inkomo airstrip at 22h33 that night. For the third time, I stood by the side of an airstrip and watched as the old work-horse Dakota dragged itself into the sky, banked with dignity, and sedately set course for Lusaka.

At 02h00 the phone by my bedside jangled discordantly. It was Richard Pomford. My God, was my immediate thought . . . the cheeky bugger is calling me from Lusaka!

'Where are you?'

'At Inkomo, Sir,' he replied, 'there was no one at the dropping zone to radio us, so we veered off, dropped our leaflets and came on home.'

I returned to my bed and a troubled sleep for the rest of the night. I sensed that this time something was really wrong.

At noon the following day, Hamish telephoned and confirmed my worst fears. A Canadian had arrived in Johannesburg on the morning flight from Lusaka, and had just called him. He had apparently been standing behind Martin in the departure queue lining up at Zambian Immigration in Lusaka airport that morning. Martin has presented his passport at the desk . . . the officer had glanced at it, then requested him to wait on one side. He had then called on the intercom system for the airport Police to come to his desk.

Martin had immediately scribbled a note with Hamish's telephone number and begged the Canadian to telephone and pass him the news.

It was a hard personal blow, but I could do little except await developments. These developments we heard later . . . came about while he was detained under Zambia's twenty-eight day detention clause of their security legislation, in Lusaka prison.

I called up Mac McGuiness as soon as I heard the news, but he was not particularly worried.

'If they've got him under the twenty-eight day detention clause, I doubt they have any proof of what he's been doing . . . they've arrested him only on suspicion.'

I went to Com-Ops to speak to General Walls, and found the whole headquarters agitated and jittered by the news.

I suggested straight out to General Walls that we immediately go ahead with the mission blindly, but this time we land on Lusaka Golf Course, which was close by Nkomo's house.

'But we must go now . . . before they break Martin under interrogation. And,' I added flatly, 'while we are at it, my lads can bust into Lusaka prison and release Martin too.'

General Walls turned down my plan, so it came as a complete surprise to me when Com-Ops came back to me two weeks afterwards and told me to lend Anthony White to the Special Air Service, who were going into Zambia to kill Nkomo.

Totally perplexed, I asked Brigadier Barnard why the Special Air Service had been tasked, when we had already collated every scrap of information regarding it. On top of that, we already had a workable plan which we could still use.

I warned strongly that his decision could have a marked morale effect on my men, who would take it that Com-Ops regarded them as incapable of doing the job.

I was told that the Special Air Service plan called for them to be embarked with their vehicles on the Zambian shore of Kariba lake by ferry-boat, and they would then use an old unreconnoitred road for part of the route to Lusaka, which made it unlikely, in my opinion, they would be able to satisfactorily keep to schedule and get to Lusaka on time.

'If you insist on the *Supers* doing it rather than us,' I said, 'why don't you land them on the old disused Lusaka airport by fixed wing aircraft, or parachute them onto the golf course . . . let them exfiltrate Lusaka on foot . . . surprise will carry them through?'

I expressed my grave reservations about the whole exercise, in any event. Martin had, by that time, been in detention for just over two weeks, and the likelihood of him having been broken down under intensive interrogation was, in my opinion, very high. An agent, during the normal course of events, is only expected to hold out for forty eight hours, which should allow his associates opportunity to exit and escape any dragnet – needless to say, we had quickly withdrawn Chris. I genuinely felt it was very much on the cards the Special Air Service might walk into a well prepared trap. Last, but by no means least, I made the point that it was highly unlikely Nkomo would be at home . . . judging by our own experiences.

I'm sure Com-Ops regarded my comments as sour grapes, but they were made without rancour and with due humility.

When I was told that, in spite of this, the Special Air Service were still doing it, I again sought permission to send in a Scout team, in tandem with the Special Air Service mission, to rescue Martin, but this too was refused.

On the 14th April, just before last light, the Kariba ferryboat edged out onto the waters of Lake Kariba, carrying a task-force of the Special Air Service, commanded by a fine officer, Captain Martin Pearse, later to die in action, and with Captain Anthony White, Selous Scouts, as a guide. Parked on the lower deck of the ferryboat were seven Sabre Land-Rovers . . . a specialist vehicle of the Special Air Service . . . which had especially been repainted in honour of the occasion in Zambian camouflage . . . which matched, incidentally, the camouflage uniforms worn by the task force.

Landing on the far shore, they took an old disused track which had been identified by air photography . . . but it was night and the *track* was a multitude of dirt roads, not just one, and it was virtually impossible to stay on the correct one. Large stretches too had been washed away in long-forgotten rainy seasons.

By the time they joined the main trunk road to Lusaka, one Land-Rover had been over-turned and nearly wrecked. Fortunately, when muscled back on its wheels, it was still functional . . . but, unfortunately, and more pertinent to the ultimate success of the operation . . . they had lost two hours and were behind schedule.

They approached the Kafue bridge crossing with caution and mounting concern, as they well knew it was protected by 14,5 millimetre anti-aircraft guns and a company of Zambian soldiers were based nearby. However, only one dozy sentry was encountered at the bridge, and he waved the convoy across without stopping them.

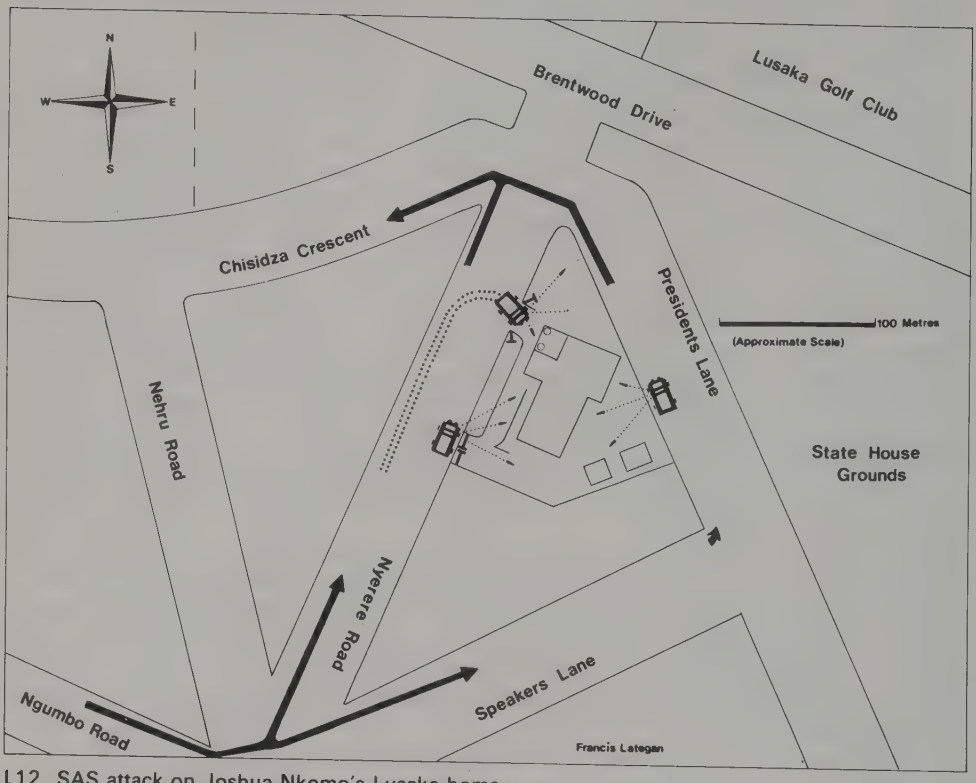
Once over, the convoy paused briefly while the telephone lines were cut to isolate the area from any alarm.

On their return trip, after the raid, the *Supers* expected a fight at the bridge, but although the sentry had been reinforced, it was only with a blanket under which he had curled up and gone to sleep.

Just before 03h00, the little convoy split into two . . . one section of four vehicles going to attack Freedom House . . . the other section of three Land-Rovers roaring to the intersection of Nyerere Road and President Lane in Lusaka.

Two of the Land-Rovers took up station to give covering fire, while the other was rammed into the main gate which did not break as expected . . . the padlock held. A *gate-crasher* explosive charge was promptly put in place and detonated.

For a short while a battle royal raged between the Special Air Service and the ZIPRA guards, some of whom, as is the custom in unsupervised Africa, had bedded down under blankets on the lawn, and some of whom, were in the house itself.



L12. SAS attack on Joshua Nkomo's Lusaka home.

The gate, by resisting the initial charge of the Land-Rover, had given them sufficient time to wipe the sleep from their eyes and recover themselves. They fought back tenaciously, but against the superior fire-power and a murderous cross-fire sustained by the Rhodesians, those outside the building soon wilted and died.

Unfortunately, in the confusion of the night battle, one Special Air Service trooper and a member of the Central Intelligence Organisation were wounded . . . as well as a Sabre Land-Rover put out of action . . . by a mixture of the cross-fire and the ZIPRA return fire.

Fire still came from the house, so amidst a fusillade of covering fire, men darted forward and put bombs through each window.

'Backfire!' yelled Anthony White in warning.

Whooosh . . . it was the distinctive sound of the RPG-7, as Anthony put in a rocket on behalf of the Selous Scouts.

A bitter fight then ensued as the Rhodesians went in and winkled out the ZIPRA survivors, amongst whom they believed, was Joshua Nkomo. A number were killed in their hiding places under beds and inside built-in cupboards. During this room to room fight for supremacy, another Rhodesian trooper was wounded in his thigh by a bullet which penetrated a wall.

Then, all the enemy were dead, the Special Air Service carefully checked every corpse that was

strewn amidst the rubble of the house . . . the roof had collapsed . . . fire was beginning to take hold . . . but there was no sign of the distinctively obese corpse of Joshua Nkomo . . . he was not numbered amongst the dead . . . he had presumably once again *listened* to the *advice* of his walking stick and escaped death. Neither did they find him frying amidst the desolation of Freedom House which had been hit simultaneously.

Nkomo, in a statement to the press afterwards, alleged he had been at home when the Special Air Service had mounted their assault, but had made good his escape through a toilet window, but the Rhodesians knew the truth . . . knew that once their attack went in, no one in his bungalow got through the curtain of their gunfire, or survived the hell of their high explosives and rockets, or the phosphorous of their bombs.

Nkomo's story was clearly a lie . . . a lie as capacious as the toilet window would needed to have been . . . for him to have successfully squeezed his gross mass of a hundred and fifty kilogrammes through.

The destruction was absolute . . . the ordinary Zambian people had no cause to love or even like the strutting, Russian uniformed, black men of ZIPRA or their obese leader who yearned to be Idi Amin . . . they gleefully and appropriately called the wreckage of the house, the Zimbabwe Ruins!

But unfortunately, in spite of it all, the mission had failed . . . Nkomo was still alive.

This raid unfortunately, but nevertheless very effectively, ended all hopes of assassinating Nkomo in his Lusaka residence . . . there was no residence left . . . there would never be another opportunity.

For Martin Broadman it was not the end of things . . . for he, as is the custom with spies, had been abandoned and denied by his country which was shrinking into political defeat . . . and he was left to his fate.

We in the Selous Scouts had always jealously looked after our own, but we were forbidden to mount a rescue. Our hands were tied . . . only fate and the best legal counsel arranged and paid for behind the scenes, by the Central Intelligence Organisation, could help now.

A see-saw of court appearances commenced in Lusaka in July, and press reports filtered out to us which said Martin had broken under interrogation a month before, and admitted he was a Selous Scout . . . which meant he had held out against the unsubtle batterings and torture of the Zambian Special Branch for an incredible two months.

Once, during this period, he escaped from Lusaka prison but was, unluckily for him, recaptured during the attempt . . . for this he was sentenced to eight months imprisonment.

Eventually, he was arraigned before the Zambian High Court charged with espionage, specifically with obtaining surveillance reports about Nkomo's Lusaka house; obtaining information regarding suitable landing places in Zambia for foreign agents; and, gathering information about the location of the British installed radar and Rapier missile system, all of which activities were said to be wrongfully and unlawfully prejudicial to the safety of Zambia, but useful to Rhodesia.

Once, it was gleefully announced in a Zambian Information Department press release that he would face the death sentence if convicted, but later this was reluctantly and very sourly watered down to a maximum prison sentence of twenty five years . . . which, even so, gave Martin the prospect of a pretty grim future.

The British supervised elections in Rhodesia came and went. The new State of Zimbabwe and the ZANU Government of Robert Mugabe came . . . but did not go . . . neither did things improve for Martin.

Finally, in early June, 1980, after the judge presiding at his trial in the High Court, had heard how Martin had been subjected to torture and had once been admitted to hospital with internal bleeding, he threw all the charges out and acquitted him. But, even after that ordeal, he was not allowed to go free, for, as he walked from the court, so-say a free man, he was immediately re-arrested and detained on another twenty eight day detention order, despite the outraged protests of his legal counsel, and thrown back into prison.

Then, weeks later, well over a year after his first detention, he was unexpectedly bundled from the prison, and without ceremony, put on a London-bound flight by the Zambian Special Branch and flown to freedom.

By then, sadly, the Selous Scouts no longer existed . . . neither for that matter did Rhodesia itself. If they had, another bravery award would have been Martin's due as sure as night follows day. Instead, all we can do is to salute his courage.

PART 9

The Middle of the End
1979

Operation Petal: Abductions in Botswana: March/April, 1979

Parallel in time to the Zambian operation we had been looking too at the situation in Botswana, where ZIPRA had by then restructured their command and intelligence organisation.

Terrorist deployments into Rhodesia were once again in full swing. According to radio intercepts, the deployments were arranged between the ZIPRA Military High Command in Lusaka and ZIPRA headquarters at Francistown. Because of this markedly increased activity we decided the time was opportune to extend our spying activities to Botswana. One of our European Scouts then applied for, and gained employment with a certain commercial organisation in Francistown.

He was given a comprehensive briefing by Special Branch on the ZIPRA personalities and organisation in Francistown, and tasked to monitor their movements and pinpoint any safe houses and all other buildings used by them.

We planned that once he had settled in his job, we'd infiltrate some African members of the Selous Scouts down to Francistown, whom he could arrange to take into employment, which would enlarge our intelligence gathering potential considerably.

Prime assignments contemplated were the assassination of various ZIPRA officials based in Francistown. Zambia now had the British radar system whereby she could monitor the direction and height of any aircraft entering her air-space and vector fighter aircraft onto hostile intruders. So, depending on the efficiency of her pilots and on the type of sophisticated aircraft the Zambian Air Force might soon acquire, it would only be a matter of time before our cross-border paratrooper or helicopter-borne deployment capabilities were severely curtailed.

For this reason we had developed a sudden close interest in the trucking activities along the Grove Road, particularly regarding passage of heavy-weight transport trucks, moving back and forth from Francistown to Zambia and Malawi, and we kept constant European surveillance on this particular aspect of movement.

To increase our knowledge of what went on along the route even further, we managed to get another European Scout a job as a driver with one of the major transport companies . . . naturally, without the proprietors being aware of his identity. This necessitated him undertaking a crash driving course on heavy transporters which was arranged by Superintendent Keith Samler of Special Branch. On his maiden trip to black Africa he was unfortunate enough to fall foul of some Zambian Army sentries, and badly beaten up because he was white.

At that time Chris Grove was still in Zambia and hoping to stay there on a permanent basis, having been offered employment the next hunting season with an established safari business. The safari business lent itself particularly well to monitoring ZIPRA activities, as the majority of the larger ZIPRA bases were to be found in the remoter areas of Zambia, and the legitimate hunting activities of the company in these areas too would have made intelligence gathering relatively easy.

We had taken careful notice that Custom's inspections of transported cargoes, by both the Zambian and Botswana Customs officials, were haphazard and perfunctory and the hiding of soldiers in large packing cases to get them through the Botswana/Zambian border . . . sort of wood and hardboard Trojan horses . . . would be relatively risk-free.

During his reconnaissances, Chris had pinpointed certain uninhabited areas adjacent to the Livingstone to Lusaka road where small groups of Selous Scouts could lie up, after being dropped off by our Selous Scout lorry driver.

Once Chris was fully established in his employment, it was envisaged he would use his safari company Land-Rover as a taxi . . . picking groups up from their bases and dropping them off to do jobs . . . then picking them up afterwards and returning them to the areas of their camps.

It would fall upon him too to keep groups working within Zambia supplied and fed and, for this purpose, he would establish food caches in various suitable areas of the bush.

When a group operating in Zambia needed to be withdrawn, this would be achieved by our own long-distance lorry driver who would pick them up on one of his runs and drop them off on the Grove Road inside Botswana, from where they could easily cross back into Rhodesia.

I had given command of the Botswana border and the responsibility of handling any external operations connected with ZIPRA to Major Butch Duncan, who was also responsible for our internal pseudo operations in Matabeleland. He exercised his command from a recently constructed Selous Scout fort situated adjacent to Brigade Headquarters in Bulawayo.

His command was not the easiest, for he had to contend with not only ZIPRA terrorist incursions, but those of ZANLA too.

The formation of a Matabele group . . . 3-Group . . . formed for the express purpose of combating ZIPRA infiltration . . . had finally been brought up to company strength.

It was a move that, initially at least, had not met with the approval of the Selous Scouts of Shona tribal extraction.

It was the first time that Matabele tribesmen had been recruited and deliberately grouped as a single military entity since the military power of the Matabele nation had been smashed in the 1896 rebellion against the European settlement of Rhodesia in 1890. After the rebellion, the various factions of the Royal House had been split up and moved to different parts of Matabeleland.

Until then the Matabele tribe, an offshoot of the Zulus, had lived in a series of huge military kraals under the control of their king or of his various regimental commanders. After the rebellion, all these military kraals were broken up and the villages re-laid out so the huts were set in lines instead of circles . . . circles could be defended . . . lines couldn't.

Great pains had been taken to recruit them into the police and, at a much later stage, when an Army was formed, into that too, but the percentage was always kept low and they were always mixed in with the Shonas.

When it had first become evident it was a must we form a purely Matabele group, I had personally toured all Army units accompanied by two Matabele Selous Scouts.

As was the usual pattern, I made no mention at all of pseudo terrorists, but said only that I was intent on recruiting men of high calibre for a special type of unit.

The criteria for the recruits I needed, I told those I was addressing, was that they *had* to be of Matabele, extraction.

In every case this last announcement provoked scepticism and the inevitable question followed almost immediately.

'Why, after all these years without one, has the Army suddenly decided to form a pure Matabele unit?'

The first time I was stumped for an answer, but after a few moments thought, I replied that as the war was spreading into the traditional Matabele tribal areas, it made good sense to recruit Matabele soldiers and put them into those areas . . . men who understood the local customs and language and who would not offend the tribesmen.

Then and later the majority vigorously nodded their heads in agreement, as the thought of soldiers of Shona extraction being in their tribal areas, whom they strongly resented, did not enthuse them at all.

We had run three selection courses during the formation, and while we found the Matabele more difficult to discipline than the Shonas, they soon proved themselves fine and aggressive soldiers.

Our agent in Francistown soon began to turn up a lot of useful information. Not only had he pinpointed the main ZIPRA headquarters there, which was more difficult than it might seem, for

ZIPRA were wariness personified after their earlier misfortunes, but he had also struck up acquaintance with several ZIPRA officials whom he occasionally drank a beer or two with in one of the Francistown hotels.

Amongst the men whom he drank with regularity was a man called Elliot Sibanda who was not tight-lipped about his job with ZIPRA . . . he was pretty proud of it in fact . . . proud he was the Intelligence Officer for the whole Southern Front.

For communciations, our man was equipped with a military radio set, disguised as an ordinary car radio, and through this medium we began to hear considerable amounts of intelligence which he gathered from Elliot Sibanda during their drinking sessions.

By degrees, as we digested these snippets of intelligence, it gradually dawned on us that the acquisition of the person of Elliot Sibanda would give us the means of obtaining the complete picture of ZIPRA's current plans, strength, *modus operandi* and future strategy in Botswana and Matabeleland.

We knew almost everything there was to know about the man . . . his description . . . his habits . . . the vehicles he used . . . his day to day routine . . . so we settled down to plan his capture as soon as the first opportunity arose.

There was an Indian businessman in Francistown well-known to Special Branch as a ZIPRA sympathiser, who was buying vehicles for ZIPRA from South Africa, using his company as a cover. ZIPRA, at that time, were very short of vehicles, both in Botswana and in Zambia.

Information came through that this Indian sympathiser had recently bought or was buying two white Land-Rovers and a Ford F250 truck which had been, or were about to be handed over to ZIPRA in Francistown, and that all three were going to be taken by road back to Zambia.

It was said too that Dumiso Dabengwa, the ZIPRA commander, whose arrival in Francistown on a visit was apparently imminent, was going to assist in ferrying the trucks back to Zambia along the Grove Road.

3-group had an ambush team whose sole task was an opportunist one of laying ambushes or carrying out kidnaps, on an as and when required basis.

When they set ambushes, captures even if wounded, were looked on as the first prize, but if that were impossible, they would go for a kill.

Three times information came through that the handover of the vehicles in Francistown was about to happen, as was the departure of the little convoy from Francistown. Three times ambushes were hurriedly set up, but no vehicles appeared.

Then, the first Air Rhodesia Viscount was shot down with a SAM-7 missile by Joshua Nkomo's ZIPRA, operating in the Kariba area, and ten of the survivors murdered.

It was the first time ZIPRA had operated in that area, and because of the importance of the event and the necessity for catching the culprits, 3-Group immediately despatched teams of Matabele Scouts to the area in an effort to catch the ZIPRA terrorists responsible.

They were there for some weeks working on it, but the trail of the culprits, to our utmost chagrin, got colder and colder.

On the 21st March, a message came from our agent. The vehicles had finally been delivered to ZIPRA in Francistown, and they were ferrying them back to Zambia along the Grove Road the following day.

This time . . . for once . . . it looked good. It had been confirmed too that Dumiso Dabengwa would be driving one of the trucks.

The men comprising 3-Group's ambush team were hurriedly picked up from the Kariba bush, bundled into a Dakota and flown to Victoria Falls where, after briefing, they spent the evening on rehearsals, although, having picked up so many *lemons* before on the job, each man knew what was expected of him.

The next morning early, the callsign was taken by Greys Scouts' vehicles to the drop-off point in Rhodesia, from where they walked six kilometres into Botswana and took their ambush positions on the Grove Road.

Stop-1, the early-warning group, comprised WO-2 Peter McNeilage, Jim Fletcher and an

African soldier. They took up position behind a large termite heap from where they would be able to read the vehicle numbers as they passed by.

The killer group, consisting of Lieutenant Piet van der Riet, Colour Sergeant Addington, Sergeant Wally Insch, Lance Corporal Stuart Hodgson and two African Scouts, sited themselves a further one and a half kilometres up the road. One and a half kilometres beyond them was Stop-2, which comprised Lieutenant Duff Clifford, Corporal Bob Rudolph and an African Scout.

Shortly after setting up the ambush, Peter McNeilage heard the distant sounds of a vehicle approaching from the south. It hardly sounded like a brand-new ex-factory Land-Rover, as the engine seemed to be missing and was back-firing constantly.

Besides that, according to the map-time appreciation worked out on the time the target vehicles were supposed to depart Francistown, they were not due until 13h00.

The pop, pop, popping of the back-firing engine came closer . . . Pete raised his head slightly . . . it was not the target vehicle but an ancient Commer truck which clearly . . . and audibly . . . had seen better days.

Then, to the joint dismay of the men of Stop-1 the old wagon gave a mechanical gasp followed by one last defiant backfire and broke down . . . right next to the ant heap.

Five disgruntled African passengers, including one very large and fat African woman, got out and stood around the vehicle helplessly. After looking at it for some time as if a miracle was about to happen, the driver lifted the bonnet and commenced tinkering with the engine, while the others looked on.

Occasionally, the driver would call to one of his companions to try the starter, but other than it making a fairly unhealthy grinding noise, the engine did not fire.

The morning progressed inexorably and the day grew hotter . . . the men at Stop-1 growing more fed-up as time passed by. If the target vehicles appeared they would have no option but to take the fat African lady and her four companions as prisoners . . . for, as soon as they spoke into their radio to warn the killer group, their close proximity would give their presence away immediately.

The woman, who was clearly getting bored with it all, seemed to be fidgetting uncomfortably, moving her not inconsiderable weight from one foot to the other.

She shyly looked about her, clearly to assure herself that her male companions were fully engrossed with the recalcitrant engine . . . then, when she was certain they were . . . she waddled off the road like a hippopotomus on its way to the river . . . except, instead of a river, she headed for a termite heap . . . Pete and Jim's termite heap!

The alarmed Scouts flattened themselves against the termite heap, while gripping their rifles lightly . . . readying themselves to leap up and blow their cover.

Then, inexplicably . . . she stopped walking . . . little more than a metre and a half away from them . . . and even more inexplicably she did not scream. She surely must have seen the fearsome men in hiding there?

Pete cautiously raised his head and was mesmerized by the sight of a huge black and naked female posterior facing him.

He watched in total fascination as she relieved herself, like a horse in a stable, then hitched up and adjusted her jersey-cloth drawers, and contentedly lumbered back to the road again.

It was difficult to tell who was the most relieved . . . the lady . . . or the Selous Scouts.

It had been a sight few Selous Scouts expected to see . . . and live to tell the tale . . . which it might be added . . . both Peter McNeilage and Jim Fletcher have done constantly ever since!

The men, meanwhile, after having pushed, pulled and prodded everything vaguely mechanical that could be pushed, pulled and prodded, without it making any difference to the sleepy engine, decided a push might help . . . so the driver got behind the wheel and everyone else pushed.

They pushed it out of sight of Stop-1, and then all the way past the killer group and through the killing ground, until suddenly . . . and totally unexpectedly . . . the engine spluttered into life. The nearly exhausted passengers clambered gratefully aboard and continued on their way.

Shortly afterwards, at about 10h30, the sounds of vehicles approaching from the south were heard by the men at Stop-1.

From their position at the termite heap they craned their necks to see . . . it could hardly be the target . . . 10h30 . . . still too early . . .

'Wait . . . it's a white Land-Rover . . . what's the other one . . ?'

'It's a Ford F250 . . . should be a Land-Rover too . . . did you get the number?'

'No . . . call up Piet van der Riet.'

For the next few moments, while a rapid discussion took place on the radio between Stop-1 and the killer group, the Scouts were in a quandry. Was it the right vehicle or not? The information had been quite definite . . . two white Land-Rovers . . . not one white Land-Rover and a Ford.

'Yes, but if it is Dumiso Dabengwa, can we afford to miss him!'

Piet van der Riet had little time to decide . . . it doesn't take long for a truck to travel one and a half kilometres . . . almost before he realised, it was in the killing ground.

'Hit it!' he ordered.

A TMA-3 mine which had been laid in the road was initiated by using a command detonator.

The explosion erupted behind the left rear wheel of the Land-Rover and tossed the back violently in the air. The vehicle careered along the road for a considerable distance on its front wheels, carried by momentum, then bounced crazily as the rear touched ground and slewed off the left-hand side of the road.

The Ford F250 came to an emergency halt, swerving across the road, just before entering the killing ground. In moments the quick-thinking driver had turned it around and was speeding back towards Francistown, his foot flat on the accelerator.

Stop-1 moved swiftly into action as it approached their position at a far greater speed than the successors to Henry Ford had ever intended their new vehicles to be driven at.

Peter McNeilage detonated a claymore set in the road but the truck boogied through the column of dirt thrown up, although the windscreen and window on the passenger's side disintegrated in a shower of glass.

Jim Fletcher stepped into the road and raked it with a burst from his RPD-light machinegun, scoring numerous hits, but it carried on and got away.

Meanwhile, back at the killing ground, Piet van der Riet and Wally Insch were running up the road to check the Land-Rover.

The Land-Rover driver, an African wearing a white shirt, had climbed out of the cab and was staggering about by the side of the vehicle, disorientated and shocked.

He looked up and saw the Scouts . . . for a split second he gaped at them . . . then he recovered as if by reflex, and ran north up the road and weaved into its bush to avoid the hail of bullets directed at him by the Scouts.

Duff Clifford was called up and told the man was heading for his position.

Their quarry was almost past when they saw him and opened fire . . . he immediately went to ground.

Duff Clifford and Bob Rudolph ran forward ready to shoot him if he resisted, but he looked up at them fearfully, his face grey, and begged them not to kill him.

He gestured at his stomach which was red with blood, and said he was wounded.

'I'll tell you anything you want to know,' he said, 'but please get me medical treatment fast . . . I don't want to die.'

'Who are you?' Duff Clifford asked. 'Are you Dumiso Dabengwa?'

'No, Elliot Sibanda . . . the Senior Intelligence Officer for ZIPRA's Southern Front.'

One of the Scouts came up with a briefcase he had taken from the Land-Rover, together with a Russian Tokarev pistol. The documents confirmed the prisoner was telling the truth . . . he was Elliot Sibanda.

They might not have got the first prize of Dumiso Dabengwa . . . but they had a handsome second prize in Elliot Sibanda. In fact, he was the most important prisoner of the whole war.

The white Land-Rover appeared, at first sight, to be totally unserviceable, but Wally Insch thought they could get it going. He jumped into the cab and turned the ignition and, astonishingly enough, the engine started.

A further all-round check of the vehicle was made and, as luck would have it, they found the rear wheel had taken the brunt of the explosion and, after it was changed, they drove it at a very slow speed the short way across the border to Rhodesia. Later, it was repaired and brought into service with the Selous Scouts.

Elliot Sibanda was casevaced, to the hospital at the Selous Scout fort in Bulawayo. Once there, the Selous Scout doctor performed a major surgical operation on his stomach . . . his wound had already resulted in peritonitis.

The surgery saved his life, but he was a very sick man for a long time, and for some days it was touch and go whether he could live or die.

Then, one day, the doctor came out of the ward and made an announcement.

'He's just had his first crap . . . it smells like a rose . . . I guess he's going to live!'

If the doctor who had anxiously hovered over his patient for so long was pleased, it was nothing, believe me, compared to how pleased the Special Branch and Selous Scouts were.

Sibanda, a short and rather plump Matabele, was a very intelligent man who had been extremely well trained. Yet, in spite of his high rank in ZIPRA, he displayed no basic difference in attitude to any of the other terrorists we had captured and, once he realised he was not about to be summarily executed, he told his Special Branch interrogators everything they wanted to know.

We heard afterwards, through Special Branch channels, that ZIPRA were aware of his ambush . . . obviously from the driver of the Ford F250 . . . but they had no idea if Elliott was dead or alive.

In April, Butch Duncan flew up from Bulawayo to see me at Andre Rabie Barracks, and a plan to kidnap the entire ZIPRA command based in Francistown.

We knew considerable friction had developed between the Botswana Police and the ZIPRA terrorists based in Botswana. From this, a situation which was interesting to us had come about.

The Botswana Government had increased the size and upgraded the equipment of the Botswana Defence Force, in which Brigadier Khama, the son of the late President of Botswana, held high rank.

Central Intelligence Organisation sources, indicated that this officer actively and wholeheartedly supported Joshua Nkomo and his ZIPRA.

Nevertheless, the late President Seretse Khama had laid down very stringent ground-rules governing the operation of ZIPRA in Botswana. They had to be covert . . . no arms could be carried . . . and . . . nothing was allowed which might cause Rhodesian military retaliation as had happened in Mozambique.

The Botswana Police, the Special Branch and the Botswana Defence Force, were very strict about it too. There had been several reported incidents where ZIPRA terrorists carrying guns had been arrested and imprisoned.

To reduce the temptation to breach this official policy, the Botswana Police and the Special Branch had been carrying out sporadic searches of ZIPRA premises in Francistown.

Our Francistown agent had, by then, provided us with the layout of all ZIPRA houses in Francistown, including the house they were using as their headquarters.

Also, we had discovered from Elliot Sibanda that the Commander of ZIPRA's Southern Front, Makapesi Tshuma, the overall commander for Rhodesian urban operations, Elliot Mpofu, and various lower ranking commanders and administrative staff, lived together in the same building.

Butch Duncan showed me some photographs of a lightly armoured Land-Rover . . . the Shortland armoured car.

This vehicle had originally been designed for street patrol work in Belfast, Northern Ireland, and a few had been presented to the Botswana Government by the British, for use by the Botswana Defence Force.

Butch traced out the design, explaining how they would be relatively easy to copy. If some were made up and painted the appropriate colours . . . they could be used as decoys in much the same way as we had used pseudo vehicles on our Mozambique columns.

His suggested plan was that on receipt of confirmation from our man in Francistown that the ZIPRA hierarchy were all present in their headquarters, a small pseudo column would be despatched to Francistown and to capture them.

His plan looked very good to me.

He mentioned he had put it to our recent capture, Elliot Sibanda, who also thought it would work.

I instructed him to return to Bulawayo and get rehearsals under way, while I arranged for the construction of the pseudo vehicles, which required specialist personnel . . . we couldn't do it in our own workshop.

Time was a pressing problem, as the best time to launch the kidnap operation would be during the Easter weekend, which was about twelve days away.

Normally, it would be expected that the production and construction of a vehicle of the type I was after . . . once it had been approved by all the necessary boards and committees . . . would take months. In addition, a large number of persons would, during the course of their normal employment, become privy to the project to the detriment of good security.

It was for these reasons I decided it was preferable to take one man at Army Headquarters into my confidence and explain completely honestly why we wanted these special vehicles, and why we wanted them quickly. I went to Army Headquarters and sought out a certain Lieutenant Colonel who dealt with the sort of things I needed doing.

The Colonel was surprised to see me . . . he was astonished when I outlined the basic plan for the operation, dwelling on the tremendous benefit to Rhodesia which would accrue if we were successful. I had clearly made the right move by taking him into my confidence, for he immediately became tremendously enthusiastic and promised faithfully to meet our deadline.

While I was there, he lifted his telephone and arranged the call-up of a number of specialist Territorial members of the Army. True to his word, the project was completed over one weekend.

Turrets had posed a time problem which would have caused delay, but this was solved by removing two from some old Ferret armoured cars which had been scrapped.

When completed, the two armoured Land-Rovers . . . the pseudo Shortlands . . . looked as if they'd come straight from the factory in Belfast. They were loaded onto the back of a transporter, carefully covered up with tarpaulins, then trundled down to the Bulawayo Selous Scout fort.

On 10th April, the two pseudo Botswana Defence Force vehicles, and a number of *experienced* column vehicles . . . all with heavy armament . . . laagered up near the Botswana border and waited for the word to go.

A reconnaissance of the bush road route into Botswana was carried out by four Scouts, two white and two black, on bicycles. In due course they reported back that the state of the road was satisfactory, and that no patrols of the Botswana Defence Force were in evidence anywhere along route. The thick loose sand along the bush track had made cycling arduous, but this would have little affect on the movement of our four-wheeled drive vehicles.

Late during the evening of the 12th April, our Scout agent in Francistown radioed through confirming the ZIPRA hierarchy were at home in their headquarters' house . . . the operation was on.

At 00h45 on the 13th April, the column, led by our two *Shortland* armoured Land-Rovers, rolled forward and over the border into Botswana. They picked their way along the sandy track making their way inland until they joined the main road . . . then drove smoothly on towards Francistown.

On the outskirts of Francistown, the main column halted and parked in a quiet place, while the two *Shortland* Land-Rovers, plus another truck to lend support, went forward through the quiet streets lined with darkened houses, towards ZIPRA Headquarters.

Orders had been issued that the greatest possible care was to be taken to avoid a clash with the Botswana Security Forces, but as the ZIPRA Headquarters was sited just below the Botswana Defence Force Barracks, there was a good chance of a ding-dong battle resulting if any shots at all were fired, or if any sort of commotion ensued during the snatch.

If this happened, the main column would immediately move into town at full speed and get the abduction party out of trouble with the aid of their weighty firepower, which was awesome.

The Land-Rovers pulled up outside the closed gates of the ZIPRA Headquarters, and one of the drivers arrogantly leaned on his hooter.

After some minutes a bleary-eyed, but unarmed ZIPRA sentry, who presumably should have been on duty at the gate, but who clearly had been sleeping, came out and blinked at them curiously.

Colour Sergeant Freddy Lakula, who was disguised as a lieutenant in the Botswana Defence Force, glared down at him from the turret of the leading *Shortland* armoured car.

'Open the gate,' he ordered.

'Who are you?' the sentry asked nervously.

'What do you mean, who are we . . . can't you see . . . we are the Botswana Defence Force.'

'I see, yes . . . sorry, well you know . . . what's going on?' the sentry asked.

'We have had some trouble with your ZIPRA soldiers,' said Lakula testily. 'Open the gate . . . who is in command here?'

The sentry came to attention, giving a poor imitation of a salute with his clenched fist, opened the gate and helpfully ushered the little convoy into the enclosed area.

Freddy Lakula rapped smartly on the front door of the house. It was opened, after a few moments, by a man rubbing sleep from his eyes.

'Who is in charge here?' snarled Freddy Lakula.

'Why?' said the man at the door. 'Well, I suppose I am.'

Freddy Lakula studied Makapesi Tshuma with some interest . . . he knew about him . . . he knew he slept in the garage . . . he knew that under his pillow he would find an AK-M sub-machinegun with a folding butt.

'We have just had an incident with your Freedom Fighters,' said Colour Sergeant Freddy Lakula, 'they have shot one of our Botswana Defence Force soldiers . . . and . . . we suspect you have got weapons inside this house. Possession of weapons is against the law of Botswana. You people have been told often enough that, under no circumstances, are you allowed to carry weapons inside our country.'

'Ah,' said Makapesi Tshuma apologetically, 'you know we've been fighting for the cause . . . my people are hungry . . . our boys are dying there inside Zimbabwe . . . every day . . .'

'We are not interested . . . your soldiers have shot one of ours,' Freddy said impatiently gestering his men to come into the house to begin the search.

He took Makapesi Tshuma with him to the garage and personally searched his quarters. In moments he produced the AK-M sub-machinegun with a flourish of triumph. They looked at each other . . . the pseudo Botswana Defence Force Lieutenant and the Southern Front ZIPRA Commander.

'You have had enough warnings,' hissed Freddy Lakula, 'now you are under arrest. All of you are under arrest. I am going to take you all back to the Botswana Defence Force Barracks and sort this matter out.'

Makapesi Tshuma did not resist . . . in fact he held out his wrists to be handcuffed, and a Selous Scout duly obliged.

More pseudo Botswana Defence Force soldiers entered the house and soon all seventeen occupants, including two female trained terrorists, were handcuffed and led meekly away to the trucks.

The house was then thoroughly searched and a huge quantity of loose documents gathered up, including a filing cabinet containing bulky bundles of lists noting the names and details of every

OPERATION VODKA – RELEASE OF ZIPRA PRISONERS AT MBOROMA DETENTION CAMP: DECEMBER, 1978

68. Waiting to mount up.

69. On the way north.

70. The advance after landing.

71. Vodka – ZIPRA Prisoners under guard.

72. Vodka – Islanders of the Rhodesian Air Force fly home packed with captured enemy documents and equipment.

73. Vodka – the men of the Selous Scouts who did it. In a group with Lieutenant Colonel Ron Reid Daly (far left).

74 and 75 Joshua Nkomo's Lusaka home after the raid by the Special Air Service in April 1979. Some unsympathetic Zambians called it the Zimbabwe ruins.

COURT TOLD OF NKOMO HOUSE DATA HUNT

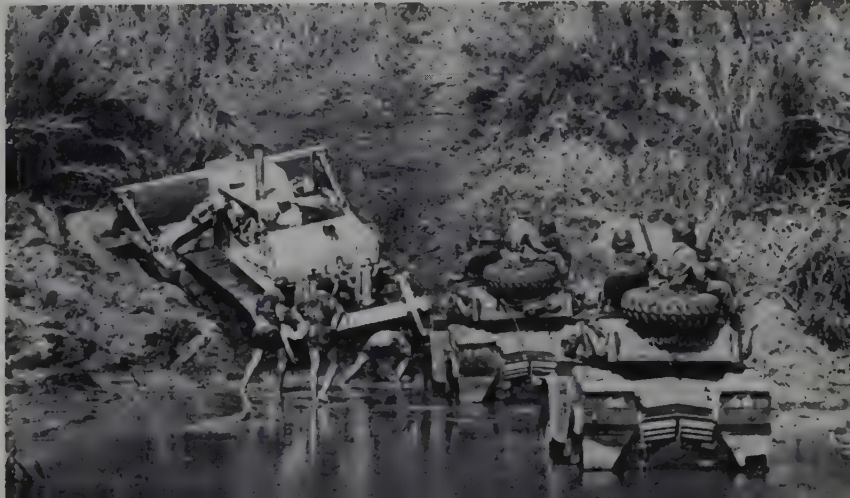
Briton spied for rebels'

76 Capture of Captain Martin Broadman, Selous Scouts, as the Times of Zambia saw it

OPERATION MIRACLE – ATTACK ON ZANLA BASE IN THE *CHIMOIO CIRCLE*: SEPTEMBER/ OCTOBER,1979

77. The column waits near Lake Alexander.

78. The column forms up at Ruda. Leading vehicle in this picture is a Pig.



79. Most column vehicles had to be towed across the Gairesi River into Mozambique by bull-dozer. In this picture two Elands are crossing.

OPERATION MIRACLE –
THE ATTACK!

80 The mortars lend support.

81. As do the twenty-five pounders of the Rhodesian Artillery – they even got a tank.

82. At the top of Monte Cassino.

OPERATION MIRACLE – TO THE VICTOR, THE SPOILS – TONS AND TONS OF THEM . . . FAR TOO MUCH TO SHOW

83. A Soviet-supplied 23 millimeter ack-ack gun . . .

84. Soviet-supplied 7,62 Dragonov sniper rifles.

85. Soviet-supplied 12,7 heavy machinegun set in a scene of bombed and shelled-out devastation.

86. A baboon kept by the terrorists to act as a living air-raid warning.

OPERATION DICE – ZIPRA AND THE SOVIET'S LAST THROW – LATE, 1979

87. and 88. Ragged but still rugged. ZIPRA and the Zambians thought this Selous Scouts' callsign was a whole company of troops.

89. Coffee break after a contact in Zambia. A dead ZIPRA terrorist can be seen in background.

tribal sympathiser who had helped in the networks throughout Matabeleland since the early days of ZIPRA's inception.

After a fruitful hour and a half combing through everything in the house, the Scouts re-embussed and drove, completely unnoticed, out of Francistown where they linked up with the others and carried on back to Rhodesia.

On the return trip the column was longer than when going in, because of the addition of a white Ford F250 . . . the one that had escaped the Elliott Sibanda ambush . . . a five ton Ford truck and the other white Land-Rover which had come to ZIPRA via their Indian friend.

It was only when the column was back in Rhodesia that the ZIPRA prisoners realised, to their horror, that instead of being in the hands of the Botswana Defence Force, they were actually prisoners of their most feared enemies . . . the Selous Scouts.

It was a tremendous coup superbly executed.

Colour Sergeant Freddy Lakula and those of his men involved in the actual deception were quite outstanding, and their coolness and thoroughly convincing threats and accusations had totally cowed the ZIPRA staff at the house, and carried the day without a single shot being fired.

We had captured the entire ZIPRA command for the Southern Front, excepting for a few minor officials, plus documents amounting to almost an archives on their operations.

The information obtained from prisoner interrogation and gleaned from the documents, dealt the ZIPRA war effort in Matabeleland another shattering blow.

A substantial arms cache was uplifted in the area of Manaka village south of Plumtree as a direct result.

A further arms cache, said to contain heavy weapons, was indicated as being sited a hundred and twenty kilometres within Botswana, and Butch Duncan immediately despatched a column under cover of darkness to capture the contents. Predictably, we were too late . . . the disappearances had caused ZIPRA to set in motion emergency measures to change the location of their cache, and by the time we arrived . . . guided in by a newly *tamed* terrorist, recently of the Southern Front Command . . . the stuff had been dug up and moved.

On the return journey to Rhodesia, the column was ambushed one kilometre inside Botswana, and during the engagement, one Selous Scout was killed and another seriously wounded. The wounded man later died while being casevaced to hospital.

As a matter of interest, it was the extreme gallantry in action of the newly *tame* ZIPRA terrorist, which saved the column from suffering more casualties in the ambush.

Canoe Operations: Cabora Bassa Lake: March, 1979

Com-Ops tasked us to examine yet another ZANLA infiltration route into Rhodesia's north-east.

Special Branch information was that they were flying or trucking their terrorists direct to Tete, from where, after being issued with arms, kit and equipment from a large hangar on the Tete airfield being used as a quartermaster's store, they were being trucked to Estima from where they were making their way on foot, from one staging post to the next, until they reached the Rhodesian border.

An intensive programme of mining these routes was undertaken by helicopter-borne troops of the Special Air Service, who rendered them virtually non-operable. The FRELIMO engineers in Tete had just about given up . . . they just couldn't cope with the clearing.

It was suspected a large ZANLA complex existed at Estima and air photography had confirmed something was there, but not whether it was a FRELIMO, a ZANLA or a Tanzanian Army base.

Because of the sustained pressure the Rhodesian Security Forces had been applying to both ZANLA and FRELIMO, Mozambique's President, Samora Machel, had appealed to the Organisation of African Unity for assistance to combat our *aggression.* As a result of this, a substantial number of Tanzanian troops . . . most of them trained by the Canadians . . . had been shipped down the coast to Mozambique to assist.

FRELIMO and ZANLA had begun to get wise to our free-fall deployments of reconnaissance groups and on a number of occasions, our men had experienced narrow escapes, after whole areas had been alerted on high-flying aircraft being sighted.

The distances involved ruled out a foot reconnaissance . . . it would have taken far too long, and the risks of detection by the locals would have been too great. As a consequence, we cast around for alternatives.

The vast man-made lake formed by damming the Zambezi River at the narrows of the Cabora Bassa gorge, sprang to mind as a way in, as part of the lake was only eighteen kilometres north of Estima. Also, a large inlet where the Musengezi River ran into it, was partly inside Rhodesia.

We first planned to launch a ten man callsign, commanded by Lieutenant Andy Kok, using Klepper canoes, into the Musengezi River from where they should have been able to approach the target undetected from the north. Unfortunately, an air reconnaissance of the jump-off point revealed a widely extensive area of mopani trees protruding from the water, which made things dangerous as most of the canoeing had to be done at night for security reasons. So, instead we picked a small island due north of the old Caponda terrorist base as start point.

On the afternoon of the 21st of March as planned, helicopters deployed ten Selous Scouts with six Klepper canoes onto the island. The intention had been for them to paddle east, that night, towards Estima, but a lake storm blew up, making travel impossible. The next night was calm, so they set off. During that and the following three successive nights, they covered a total distance of eighty one kilometres.

During the hours of daylight they hid up on shore keeping a strict sentry watch.

On 25th March, they established a firm base near where the old village of Chicoa had been, before being submerged beneath the rising lake waters.

They spent the next two days preparing for a reconnaissance of Estima, but as they were about to move out, a party of fisherman were sighted nearby, and the patrol was forced to go into hiding for a further day until they had left.

Lieutenant Kok then detailed two men to remain behind to protect the firm base and the rest belatedly moved out on the 30th March.

Three days later, they beached and hid their canoes at a place not too far from the dam wall, and set out to march across country to Estima. The going was painfully slow, not only because of the dense and almost impenetrable thorn bush, but also because of old mine fields laid during the Portuguese days, to protect the dam wall and the hydro-electric installations from FRELIMO attack. After delicately picking a route through, they started to make better time until, on the 6th April, they were positioned on the hill feature of Estima, which resembles a steam train towing carriages, which accounts for its name, a bastardised form of the word *steamer.*

Scanning the countryside spread out below them with high powered binoculars, they identified a previously unknown FRELIMO camp and established that the suspect camp was definitely occupied by ZANLA. Observation was maintained for several days, during which time they counted sixty one ZANLA terrorists.

A request for an air strike was agreed to by Com-Ops, but after setting it for 06h30 the next morning, it was cancelled at the last minute due to a more urgent target coming up for the Canberras to attend to. It was left to me to pass on the bad news to the team who were, by then, expectantly waiting for the Air Force to appear.

They couldn't stay, because they were low on rations, so they reluctantly withdrew to their concealed canoes on the 12th April.

Using ponchos as makeshift sails, they harnessed the prevailing wind and sailed back to their firm base in a mere eight hours.

An air strike was put in on the ZANLA base two days after they left, but annoyingly, we were never able to establish the enemy casualty figures.

On the 18th April, they again sailed, heading this time for a bay nearby the dam wall.

Special Branch had heard that ZANLA were using lake transport to ship forces down from camps north of the lake, and the patrol was tasked to check it out.

Observation points were set up, but during the next five days nothing was seen in the way of ZANLA traffic, although a number of FRELIMO motor patrol boats were seen, some of which came uncomfortably close to where the canoes had been concealed.

On the 24th April, they again returned to firm base using their poncho sails to best advantage.

On the 25th April, they canoed eastwards to a rendezvous, from where, on the 26th April, they were helicoptered home.

They had spent five weeks and travelled hundreds of kilometres on the lake, without FRELIMO or ZANLA becoming aware of their presence. What's more, they had not been re-supplied once. When their supplies ran low, they'd caught fish in the lake and eaten game they'd either shot with a silenced .22 rifle they were equipped with, or which they had caught in snares.

With hindsight, I think we should have given them engine-driven assault craft instead, as this would have increased their mobility and effectiveness by several hundred per cent.

The Cabora Bassa lake was clearly an environment where men could live almost indefinitely, with little chance of detection. We learned there was considerable scope there for *shoot and scoot* hits on ZANLA and FRELIMO supply routes, but we were never able to take advantage of this. Politically, things were moving to a head in Rhodesia and quick results to inflict maximum casualties on the enemy were the orders of Com-Ops, presumably to boost the bargaining power of the Rhodesian Government, when it was once again forced to the conference table.

Selous Scouts' Church

While religion has meant little to me personally, I knew from hard practical experience, both as a man and as a soldier, just what it meant to most men, regardless of how hard an exterior they portrayed. And, it was for this reason, I ordered preparations to be made for a re-dedication parade, the first time I could get the Regiment together as a complete unit at Andre Rabie Barracks.

I 'phoned the Army Chaplain-General, told him my plans and asked him to conduct the service. Unfortunately, he had a prior commitment which left me at a loss as I felt a very special padre . . . not just anyone . . . had to conduct this service. Later, while in the Selous Scouts' senior ranks mess, I despondently mentioned the problem to some Scouts I was having a drink with. Amongst them was Peter Grant, a lanky member of the Special Branch attached to us, and he suggested his father, Reverend Peter Grant, who had been an artillery officer during World War-2, before getting the call.

I 'phoned and asked if I might see him, and so we met, and I took an immediate liking to him. I realised immediately he was that type of padre that soldiers needed and understood . . . he was, in fact, a very special man of God.

The orders for the parade followed very closely the format of a medals' parade, but the highlight of this one was the calling of the Regimental Roll of Honour . . . the roll of our officers, non-commissioned officers, and men, who had been killed in action.

The Scouts formed up in a massed phalanx on the parade ground and movingly sang the Regimental funeral song.

While the singing was in progress, the harmony would suddenly lull for a moment . . . and the regimental number, rank and name of each of our brave dead, was called out in turn.

The African Regimental Sergeant Major and the European Regimental Sergeant Major, each standing at widely separated places on parade, alternately called the names on the roll of Scouts killed in action, in ringing parade ground voices.

'ABSENT . . . he is in the field of honour, SIR!' A soldier within the ranks . . . a different one for each name called, responded.

It was an incredibly moving experience and afterwards, Padre Grant set his seal on it by his soldierly address to the assembled parade and the enraptured audience of relatives.

I wrote to Padre Grant a few days afterwards, thanked him for his services and requested he become the Regimental Padre.

During my service as a soldier, I had become aware of just how vital a role a padre can play if he is of the right calibre. It is essential, to my mind, he be a man of character who fears no man . . . particularly the Commanding Officer . . . for to this type of padre, the most hardened old soldier will confide his innermost private thoughts and feelings.

Padre Grant, would, I knew, meet the bill and become a tower of strength to the Regiment and the men in it . . . particularly before operations when the majority of men need some form of spiritual guidance.

To my ever-lasting delight, Peter Grant accepted my offer and became the Regimental Padre. I count it as one of the best moves I have ever made, and it was not long before he assumed a unique position, which enabled him to give me, as the Commanding Officer of the Selous Scouts, an accurate reflection of the feelings of the men, without breaching any confidences. In a short time he enjoyed the respect, regard and admiration of every man serving in the Regiment.

It was not long after his appointment, that Padre Grant and I agreed that high on the list of building priorities should be a Regimental Church, and together we selected a site amidst a large stand of indigenous trees in a secluded part of the Andre Rabie Barracks area.

A young National Service Officer, Kobus Mentz, a qualified architect in civilian life, who was serving in our Intelligence Section, designed the Church for us.

Like the Selous Scouts themselves, its design was unique and Kobus, in my opinion, captured our very essence and spirit in his design concept. He subtly and cleverly combined, melded and harmonised influences from both European and African cultures.

The basic design followed the style of a round hut of African tradition . . . but it was very large. It was not totally circular, as the last quarter of its circumference was flat, and this formed the backdrop into which was built the pulpit, which was scooped from the front of a vertically placed huge hollow concrete pillar, which took the main, and not inconsiderable weight, of the thatched roof.

A heavy and beautifully crafted arched door and the pulpit itself, had been made from richly grained African mahogany from the forests of Mozambique. A Salisbury timber merchant, when he heard our intentions, had promptly stepped forward and offered to make them.

We didn't tell him . . . neither did we tell Padre Grant . . . that the timber had been *liberated* from FRELIMO control by our fighting column, sent into Mozambique on operation *Virile.*

Operation Liquid: Reconnaissance for Air Strike on Mulungushi: April, 1979

Air photography on a continuing basis, together with the intelligence picture gathered by Special Branch, indicated that Mulungushi camp had not been abandoned after the air attack on the 22nd December, 1978; quite the reverse was the case. It had increased in size by leaps and bounds and by April, the strength ZIPRA had there was estimated as in the region of nine thousand.

To verify this, Selous Scouts were tasked by Com-Ops to carry out another reconnaissance to confirm or deny this information. I detailed Schulie and Chibanda to go again, and they were deployed on the afternoon of the 9th April. If a large number of occupants was confirmed, they were to set up flares for a night bombing run.

Before deployment, Schulie and Chibanda both spent a great deal of time with the Canberra squadron, discussing and planning the best run-in and the best position for the flares.

The Air Force insisted the raid take place on the night of the 10th April, because there would be ideal moonlight then.

The time of the strike was also firmed in advance at 19h00. It was reckoned the relatively small number of casualties suffered by ZIPRA in the first raid, had been due to their taking cover in the extensive underground bunker system that was there.

To stop this happening a second time, it was decided to put in the air strike after dark, so that complete surprise could be achieved . . . and at 19h00 . . . according to known ZIPRA routine, they would be eating in the cookhouse areas.

The darkness should stop the enemy sighting the bombers as they came in, and, the way the

Canberras seem to run ahead of their sound, the bombs would be bursting on target before they knew what was happening.

Surprise was an important factor to the Air Force too, as a large number of newly-installed anti-aircraft weapons in bunkers had been pin-pointed on aerial photographs taken of the camp and area. Alpha bombs, to be effective, have to be released at approximately three hundred feet, which makes an aircraft a vulnerable target if sighted in good time.

By nightfall on the 10th April, Schulie had counted no more than ten terrorists in the camp, so he came on the air briefly, gave a terse sitrep and recommended the air strike be postponed until the next night. He laconically concluded his message and immediately, as was his usual routine, went off the air, assuming as also was normal, we would follow his recommendation.

He had gone off the air until the next day, and I knew there was no way I could contact him until then. I called Com-Ops on the secrophone and passed on Schulie's message.

The Air Force were unhappy about Schulie's call for a postponement and said that because of the moon condition, they were in favour of going ahead with the strike anyway.

Com-Ops, after weighing the pros and cons, agreed and ordered the strike to go in on schedule.

I couldn't tell Schulie of the Com-Ops' decision and to make things worse, Com-Ops for some strange reason of snafu, forgot to let the Canberra squadron know that the reconnaissance team had not set up any flares for them to aim at. In fact, even had I been able to re-establish contact with Schulie by that late stage, there would have been insufficient time for him to have put out flares anyway.

A dangerous situation was building up due to this series of omissions which was to have near fatal consequences for Schulie and Sergeant Chibanda.

The Canberras, blissful in their ignorance, took off on time and headed for Zambia.

Schulie and Chibanda, equally oblivious the raid was on, were conducting a close-in reconnaissance as the Rhodesian jets rapidly approached.

It is doubtful if even the ZIPRA terrorists were so horrifyingly surprised by the familiar, but totally unexpected sudden whisper, which converted almost instantly to an ear-splitting roar. Schulie glanced up, and for a brief second was shocked to see the unmistakable hard black outlines of the Canberras silhouetted against the night sky above him.

The Squadron Leader commanding the attack, was nearly frantic with frustration . . . he had been desperately calling Schulie on the radio, as they approached the target. When he reached the point where he expected the flares to blossom into light on the ground ahead of him and they didn't, he assumed Schulie's radio had become unserviceable and pressed the button on the instrument panel, which his finger had been caressing, to initiate them himself.

The navigator glued his eyes expectantly to the bomb sights awaiting his aiming marks . . . but the ground stayed dark. Then, the squadron swept on over the terrorist training camp.

Surprise had certainly been lost, but the Squadron Leader decided that having come so far they would bomb the camp anyway . . . even without flares.

He ordered the squadron to turn a full circle . . . a manoeuvre difficult enough by day . . . at night with no navigation lights . . . almost suicidal . . . but those boys were good.

The aircraft, by a miracle it seemed, executed a perfect synchronised turn, and although there was a premature greying of hair on at least one flyer's head, they all came through unscathed.

After sorting themselves out, they lined up once more and homed in on the target . . . an area which was well illuminated by a fireworks display of tracer being chucked up at them. They commenced their runs in.

Schulie and Chibanda, knew what was coming next and flattened themselves so much against the ground that they felt part of it, cowering into the dirt as the bombs earthquaked the ground around them.

Fortunately, for the team as well as the terrorists, most bombs fell off target. And, as the element of surprise had been lost, there were few casualties.

The ZIPRA anti-aircraft gunners were soon thoroughly warmed to their job and continued to

bombarded the empty night sky long after the Rhodesian aircraft had departed for home . . . expending in the process a tremendous amount of ammunition.

Schulie and Chibanda, taking advantage of the noise and confusion, hastened away from the camp, their nerves tending towards being jumpy.

There were harsh recriminations at Com-Ops, with the heaviest box-barrage bracketing the Selous Scouts. It was clear they had forgotten I had told them that Schulie had asked for a postponement, and also that I had warned them it was impossible for me to re-establish radio contact with him once he had gone off the air . . . even though this was hypothetical, so far as the flares were concerned.

Com-Ops ordered the Canberras in again the next morning, hoping to catch ZIPRA off-guard as, until then, camps had rarely been bombed two days in succession.

After the second raid, Schulie positioned himself to monitor traffic using the camp access road.

On the 13th April, he reported heavy vehicular traffic on the road and also the presence of numerous ZIPRA foot patrols who were out scouring the area, which had precluded him from getting close to the camp so he hadn't been able to ascertain how sucessful the raids had been. To find out, he reported that he intended stopping a likely vehicle and capturing, if possible, a high-ranking ZIPRA commander.

While they were waiting for the right vehicle to appear, the Air Force put in another air strike on the camp . . . this time on the afternoon of the 14th of April.

After that the road was deserted until the next day, when a six vehicle convoy passed on its way to the camp. Then nothing was seen until the 18th April, when another convoy of nine vehicles, carrying boxed supplies, also passed on its way to the camp.

By the 21st April, no suitable chance of capturing a ZIPRA officer had presented itself, and rations too had long passed crisis point. Accordingly, although with reluctance, the team requested uplift and they were flown back to Rhodesia.

Operation Enclosure: Abduction attempt: Grove Road, Botswana: September, 1979

The men of 3-Group, Selous Scouts based in Bulawayo, were ever-busy . . . having an enormous area to cover because the whole of Matabeleland, particularly the ZIPRA infiltration routes across the Zambezi and Lake Kariba into Rhodesia, as well as the sensitive areas along the Grove Road in Botswana . . . all fell within their area of responsibility.

In Setember, Special Branch said there was a very important ZIPRA contactman, Mkwananzi, based near Kazungula, staying at one of Botswana's prime tourist spots, the Chobe River Lodge, who controlled the entire movement of ZIPRA terrorists crossing from Zambia, through the Caprivi Strip, into Botswana.

Once in, the standing instruction was to contact him. It then became his immediate responsibility to arrange transport . . . usually moving them himself in a ZIPRA truck . . . to wherever they had been tasked to go.

It was also his responsibility to arrange for the collection of ZIPRA terrorists after exfiltration from Rhodesia.

Terrorists exfiltrating had instructions to make their way across the border to the Grove Road. Once there, they were told to stop a vehicle and send a message to let Mkwananzi know they were there, so he could pick them up and take them either to Pandamatenga, Francistown or Silibe Pikwe.

There was a large ZIPRA terrorist camp at Silibe Pikwe, housing purely ZIPRA terrorists, while another camp closer to Francistown was a refugee camp proper, where all the women, children and sick old men were housed.

Mkwananzi was making an extraordinary nuisance of himself and it seemed an excellent idea to capture him alive, if we could. For, if he was under our control, we should, for a while until our mischief was exposed, be able to grab a fair crop of groups incoming from Zambia, as well as others exfiltrating from Rhodesia . . .

We decided the best way to take him prisoner was to bait a trap with a pseudo group sent

into Botswana to wait on the Grove Road, in the pretence they were an exfiltrating ZIPRA terrorist group. Once in they would stop a vehicle and send a message for Mkwananzi to come to them . . . a message he couldn't ignore.

Meanwhile, elements of the Selous Scouts' assault group, consisting of both Territorial Army and regular members, would be standing by to mount an ambush.

The pseudo group, commanded by Sergeant Kezi, a big and very well-built Matabele, crossed the border posing as an exiting group. They looked the part too, being dirty, smelly, apparently starving hungry and carrying a bloodied casualty on a home-made stretcher.

Once at the Grove Road they put their plan into operation and stopped a South African registered Coley Hall heavy transporter. They unceremoniously dragged the African driver from the cab, making no effort to hide the fact they were a very disgruntled and fed-up ZIPRA group.

After kicking him a few times, they robbed him of the few rand he was carrying, stomped his expensive watch into the road, and blackened his eyes.

They then unceremoniously bundled the frightened man back into the cab of his truck . . . positive they had achieved the effect they had intended.

'Right,' said Sergeant Kezi, 'when you get to Kazungula, go and tell that bastard Mkwananzi that we are *still* waiting for him. Say we've been here for nearly two days now and we've got a dying man with us. This is the third time we've asked him to come. Tell him to shift his arse down here quick and pick us up. You'd better tell him we are getting pretty flat and that if he doesn't come quickly we are going to jump a transporter . . . the first one that comes along . . . and we'll see how much he likes that!'

They guessed, with reasonable certainty, the driver would seek out Mkwananzi. Drivers of foreign transport vehicles travelling in Botswana were inevitably anxious to protect themselves and stay neutral in the Rhodesian conflict. He certainly wouldn't want to take the risk of returning on a later trip, perhaps several months afterwards of meeting up once more with the same terrorist group who might then kill him, as a reprisal, for not having delivered the message.

They knew too, with absolute certainty, that once Mkwananzi got the message he would come hot-foot to pick them up . . . he would be horrified . . . in case the Botswana authorities heard about the Coley Hall driver being beaten up and robbed . . . and got there before he did.

ZIPRA occupied an increasingly tenuous position in Botswana and had to abide by all sorts of rules and regulations, laid down by the Botswana Government, as has been said before.

One of the strictest rules was that under no circumstances were they allowed to hitch lifts on transport vehicles after exfiltration from Rhodesia . . . for this would draw publicity . . . adverse publicity . . . to their goings-on.

They were in Botswana on sufferance and the lower echelon officials certainly made sure they realised it. The official directives to the Police and the Botswana Defence Force were to leave them alone so long as they kept a low profile.

Botswana certainly did not appreciate it when they drew attention to themselves . . . by beating up long-distance lorry drivers for instance . . . because the Rhodesians might then take it as an excuse to mount cross-border raids and start creating as much havoc as they had in Mozambique and Zambia.

It was for this reason that all ZIPRA movements had to be carried out at night and in their own vehicles . . . and . . . under no circumstances, were weapons allowed to be carried or displayed. Infringements of this particular rule were regarded very seriously indeed, and the Botswana Defence Force and the Police were always putting up road-blocks for the express purpose of stopping and searching ZIPRA vehicles for weapons.

Having passed on their message, Sergeant Kezi and his men settled down, with elements of the assault group which had followed them in from Rhodesia, to await Mkwananzi's reaction.

After some hours . . . more or less as they had anticipated . . . a grey Ford F250 pick-up, registration number BD169, came rolling down the road at high speed towards the ambush site.

The radio of Stop-1 . . . the early warning group . . . crackled into life.

'He's coming . . . there are two terrorists in the back . . . we can see some stretchers too.'

The ambushers had laid a branch on the road within the killing ground . . . this was the established signal to ZIPRA vehicles that a group was in concealment off the road awaiting collection.

It had been anticipated it was going to be an easy one . . . the truck would stop, the pseudos in ZIPRA uniform would run up to the vehicle without alerting Mkwananzi to the danger he was facing. Then, once they were at the vehicle, Mkwananzi would have no option but to capitulate.

Instead, the vehicle ground on over the branch and continued through the killing ground . . . the first prize of capturing him was out . . . he had to be killed.

'Hit him,' said Pete McNeilage.

The drill was for an RPG-7 rocket to be loosed off at the truck to stop it . . . but the rocket misfired.

Ian Wallace leapt into the centre of the road to recover the situation and sprayed the truck with a full burst with his RPD light machinegun . . . straight through the windscreen.

The vehicle careened off the road and overturned . . . spewing impedimenta, stretchers and weapons all over the place.

The Scouts ran forward to the wreck.

The two terrorist passengers were dead, but there was no sign of Mkwananzi . . . the driver.

Mkwananzi, although the truck had been wrecked before the very eyes of the Scouts . . . had somehow got out of the wreck and escaped into the thick bush.

A helicopter, carrying Captain Andy Samuels, was overhead almost immediately, he had been standing by across the border in case he was needed to uplift the prisoner . . . an aerial search commenced straight away . . . but neither the callsign on the ground nor the helicopter found any trace of Mkwananzi.

Later, it was discovered through radio intercepts, that he had got away.

The Selous Scouts' agent in Francistown visited him in hospital . . . he had three bullets lodged in his body but, in spite of that handicap, he had managed to get away from the ambush scene and make his way to safety.

It was disappointing for he would have made a good capture. However, our main objective of putting him out of action was achieved, for he was hospitalised for a number of weeks, putting a short term stop to his activities as there was no one with enough local knowledge to replace him.

Then, on release from hospital, when we were beginning to worry that he was about to re-commence his subversive activities, he rolled his own private car while out driving, killing his wife and all his children and putting himself back in hospital with a broken spine.

He was never again, in fact, to operate in his old capacity as a ZIPRA contactman.

Operation Miracle: Attack on new ZANLA Base in Chimoio Circle: Monte Cassino Hill: September/October, 1979

During mid-1979, there was a marked increase in the rate of ZANLA infiltrations into Rhodesia's Eastern Districts.

Their main base in Mozambique, before it had been knocked out by the Rhodesian Light Infantry and the Special Air Service in their very successful raid, had been Chimoio, but they had now dispersed into penny packets well away from Chimoio itself . . . although the exact whereabouts of these camps was unknown.

We knew they couldn't move too far away from Chimoio, for that was the main FRELIMO administrative centre for Manica Province and, consequently, ZANLA's too. So, although they might keep moving their bases to stay one step ahead of the Security Forces, they were still forced, by reason of administrative necessity, to stay within an approximate radius of sixty kilometres of Chimoio . . . which area became known to the Security Forces as the Chimoio Circle.

An assessment was made of the information to hand by Superintendent Winston Hart, now at Com-Ops, and an area in Mozambique was determined as to where the first searches should be made to pinpoint the lastest camp.

The first reconnaissance for this purpose was undertaken by a callsign of the Special Air Service, who were deployed into Mozambique by helicopter, after which they were to walk to the suspect area to check things out.

Unbeknown to them, they had been dropped right into the central camp area itself which . . . it was only discovered afterwards . . . covered a total area of some sixty four square kilometres.

Suddenly, while they were walking from the dropping zone, they came under fire and were forced to hurriedly retreat and call for a *hot* extraction.

The next attempt at reconnaissance was by a two-man Selous Scout callsign. It was decided they would walk into Mozambique, rather than use helicopters, as ZANLA were very nervous of air noises, which was why no aerial photographic reconnaissance had been carried out up until this time. They moved in from the eastern highlands, taking their time, lying up during the day until they reached the camp area.

From one hill they saw a lot of terrorist activity in the base area, but then they moved on to get a view from another area. While crossing a camp access road, a group of ZANLA terrorist women, checking the road for signs of strangers, saw them.

The terrorists . . . female or not, were no ladies . . . and immediately opened fire and another *hot* extraction had to be called for.

We were gradually getting to know more about the general area in which the camp was situated, but we could not pinpoint particular camps, nor get anything else than a disjointed view on its likely size and limits.

The stories given by captures on interrogation didn't help much either . . . sometimes it seemed as if each capture was talking about entirely different camps . . . but gradually it became clear that the new Chimoio complex consisted of a very large number of camps spread over a very wide area. Now this in itself gave little cause for alarm, as ZANLA, we knew, had adopted a policy of dispersing their camps because of the severe maulings they had suffered at the hands of the Rhodesians during cross-border raids.

Unfortunately, too, due to early compromise, the reconnaissance teams had been unable to produce much of positive interest.

Having had two reconnaissance teams compromised, there was concern at Com-Ops that ZANLA would move their camp elsewhere, because of the fear of a large-scale raid on it by the Rhodesian Security Forces. The Special Branch were firmly of the opinion that they wouldn't, as information had begun to indicate it was large and heavily defended . . . and it was probable the enemy had decided they were sufficiently strong to be able to beat off Security Force attacks.

Com-Ops accepted this conclusion and tasked the Air Force to carry out a photographic reconnaissance as soon as possible. No one liked ordering this, particularly as high-flying Canberras served to alert the terrorists . . . but we had to clarify the extent of the camp somehow.

The immediate problem was that a photographic reconnaissance couldn't be carried out right away, as the rains had commenced, and the target area either had too much cloud cover, or the glare was too great for the photographs to have come out, but finally, after a lot of false starts, a Canberra run was made.

When the pictures taken were first examined by the Air Force photographic interpreters, Captain Peter Stanton of the Selous Scouts, was asked to come along.

They found much more than they had expected . . the complex was huge and apparently consisted of five separate camps, each very heavily defended with heavy armaments and anti-aircraft weapons, hewn into the rock on top of high ground in the area. The most prominent feature, which was to become known as Monte Cassino . . . named after the hill and monastry in Italy, which was so bitterly contested by German paratroopers against attacks by British and

Commonwealth troops during World War-2 . . . was a large, almost bald kopje, shaped like a half a rugby-ball sticking from the ground, although from some angles it looked more the shape of an old battleship.

A trench and bunker system honeycombed the whole area . . . both on the hill features and in the camp areas below.

To make everyone even more thoughtful, not all of the area showed up on the aerial photography because it was partially covered by cloud . . . there could easily be more to the base . . . nevertheless, there was certainly enough for the summoning together of staff for an immediate meeting of Com-Ops, so an assessment could be made.

Com-Ops planning staff commenced the early stages of putting together a normal Fireforce-type attack . . . troops run-in by helicopters, combined with paratrooper drops from Dakotas . . . initially, at least, the Selous Scouts were not to be involved.

Then came a factor which led to the suggested introduction of the Selous Scouts into the operation. This was information indicating that FRELIMO had demarcated special areas to which ZANLA were restricted . . . and . . . they were strictly forbidden to enter other areas. The intention behind this was, as far as possible, to keep the disastrous effects of Rhodesian Security Force raids, and the war itself away from the Mozambique people so it didn't affect their daily lives. Some captures said that the escape drills, should the base come under attack, ordered that the terrorist occupants flee the camp, only in a westerly direction towards Rhodesia . . . and to blend in and merge with the people there, where tribal affinities straddled the border . . . rather than in the opposite direction, towards Chimoio, the FRELIMO heartland.

Once in that area, they would wait things out among the villagers, or in the bush, until the attack was over and life had once again been restored to what was more or less normal. They would then make their way back to the camp area and, depending on the circumstances found there, either take up residence in the same camp and continue as before or, get busy and construct a new one close by.

Resulting from this information which appeared very reliable, it was suggested, in the first instance, that something different from what had become the normal, almost formalised, terrorist base attack, be tried. Why not send the whole of the Selous Scouts . . . every regular and every Territorial . . . into Mozambique posing as a pseudo terrorist force? Once in, they would seal off all roads leading to the base, and totally cut off all ingoing supplies, and movements both in and out. To achieve this, they would form stop and hunter/killer groups . . . everyone posing as returning terrorist groups . . . and between them create a situation where the enemy became so jittered, they didn't know which way to turn . . . and where they attacked each other in efforts to get away.

The plan would likely have resulted in massive terrorist casualties, but even at the least, it would certainly have pressed the ZANLA panic button and resulted in them evacuating the area entirely in disorder, which would have totally disrupted their infiltration plans.

The Com-Ops' planners didn't like the idea, preferring the conventional helicopter and parachute attack already mooted.

Then, after the first suggestion regarding the use of the Scouts in the operation was turned down, another, arising out of the first one, was put forward. This time, it was suggested that a limited number of Selous Scouts – all the operators – would cross the border on foot as pseudo callsigns to mingle with the people in the border villages, to deal with the ZANLA terrorists fleeing in that direction, in accordance with their known escape drills, while other troops, probably the Rhodesian Light Infantry and the Special Air Service, would go in by helicopter and parachute, and mount the main attack.

Our part in the plan, called for our groups to adopt the same *modus operandi* we had been using internally in Rhodesia . . . they would pose as returning terrorist groups . . . arrange meetings and set up any terrorist groups found for Fireforce kill.

This idea . . . after a lot of discussion . . . was finally adopted.

Meanwhile, no matter how the operation was mounted, the necessity was there for the intelligence picture on the camp to be completed as far as was humanly possible. Captain Peter Stanton, Selous Scouts, working from Inkomo, took over the responsibility for this, which necessitated him visiting the various intelligence agencies, a lot of district Police stations in the Eastern Districts, and Security Force units in the field.

His dossier began to grow as more information came in from the interrogation of captured terrorists and from other sources, and gradually a clearer picture as to what the raiding force might expect, began to build up.

Suddenly there was a lot of justified hesitation at Com-Ops level . . . because of the large numbers of anti-aircraft weapons which captured terrorists spoke about . . . even additional to those which showed up on the aerial photographs . . . and the general strength and extent of the bunker system dug into the area.

It was then discovered, and confirmed by several reliable sources, that all the anti-aircraft weapons had been positioned with extreme and finicky care, to gain maximum effect, by Soviet advisers attached to FRELIMO. The effectiveness of the positionings was confirmed after we over-ran the base.

Com-Ops were immediately apprehensive that perhaps the whole situation was a set-up, designed with Russian connivance, to knock the precious, even if mostly outdated, aircraft of the Rhodesian Air Force out of the skies . . . and thus destroy our Fireforce and ground attack capability.

If this was the case . . . or, even if there was a remote possibility of it being the case . . . then we had to think again as we couldn't take the chance of sending the Air Force, plus the men of the Rhodesian Light Infantry and the Special Air Service, into a trap.

The only other alternative was going in from the ground with a flying column . . . and flying columns were a Selous Scouts' speciality . . . but it couldn't be an ordinary one like on previous raids, as we knew the strength of their defences . . . and it would be likely we were expected, even if only half-heartedly. So the column had to be heavily strengthened with a lot more vehicles of our own, and anything else which could help. This time there was no argument . . . we could have anything we liked . . . the Armoured Car Regiment's Eland armoured cars with their shatteringly powerful ninety millimetre pieces, which should be able to handle with relative ease any fortifications and armaments that the terrorists might have in the base area . . . and even the good old ex-British twenty five pounders of the Rhodesian Artillery, to be used in support or to help see off any FRELIMO or ZANLA armour, that might be despatched from Chimoio or Vila de Manica to interfere.

To lend support, the Rhodesian Light Infantry were tasked to supply men for stop groups to the west of the camp, to kill or capture the small number of terrorists who, it was anticipated, would disobey policy orders and flee in that instead of an easterly direction. Because of this belief, the Rhodesian Light Infantry coverage there was relatively light . . . which was to prove a bad mistake.

The overall command of the operation was to be shared between myself, who would be based on top of a high hill just inside Mozambique, with my operations staff and the full range of equipment in the way of teleprinters and radios, etc., and command the battle during the night hours, and Colonel Brian Robinson and Wing Commander Norman Walsh of Com-Ops, who would take over the battle direction during daylight hours from a command Dakota circling the general area.

The concept was good, but the execution was not always what it should have been, and there was a tendency towards over-communication and over-direction from the command Dakota, resulting in far too much radio traffic, which often drowned out the communications of the battle troops on the ground.

The command of the column was given to Richard Pomford, because of his considerable experience in these sort of things, and the armoured cars, commanded by Major Winkler, an American, were put under his overall direction.

A command post was established at Grand Reef airfield near Umtali, and a forward TAC-HQ positioned at Lake Alexander. The ground troops, the artillery and the armoured cars were positioned north of Lake Alexander in the forest area, and the back-up troops, helicopters and medical facilities, were positioned at Lake Alexander itself.

A very small advance unit of Special Branch and Selous Scouts, some four or five men, arrived at Lake Alexander a day in advance of the troop arrivals.

While they were pitching their tent, an inquisitive farmer drove up and took in their camouflage uniforms and their Land-Rover in one glance.

'Oh,' he asked, 'what are you chaps doing here?'

The Special Branch officer nodded at the tranquil waters of Lake Alexander. 'Bit of R and R – rest and recreation – thought we'd come up and do some trout fishing.'

'Hmm,' said the farmer alarmed at their apparent inexperience. 'You know the terrs come across the border thick and fast around here. You could get into trouble camping out like this.'

'We'll be okay,' said the Special Branch officer reassuringly, picking up his FN rifle and patting it. 'We can look after ourselves. Besides, we've got some friends arriving tomorrow to join us.'

'Mind how you go then,' said the farmer getting back in his truck. It was clear he was troubled by the inexperienced Police Reservists, which is what he'd taken them to be, wanting to play Boy Scouts in the midst of war.

The following day he returned to check they were okay, only to see something like twelve helicopters lined up in a row, numerous vehicles and a large number of purposeful soldiers.

'Hi,' said the Special Branch officer to the bemused farmer.

'Hi yourself,' he replied, 'but . . . bugger me you've got a lot of fishing friends!'

Entry by the column into Mozambique had posed a problem, due to mine fields both on our side and on the enemy side. Eventually, it was decided they would go in across the Gairezi River, north of Ruda, in the Hondi valley. Unfortunately, when looked at, it was seen that a Bailey bridge was needed . . . a very long one indeed was required to span it . . . and the Engineers didn't have one anything like that size.

Well, it was over to the Engineers. Could they come up to their usual expectations and perform the impossible?

'We'll give it a bash,' said the Sappers. 'We'll bulldoze down the banks . . . put in a mat of logs here and there . . . shouldn't be too difficult.'

Unfortunately, there was a security problem too. They couldn't commence any work on the crossing point until the evening before the attack went in, because there were too many tribesmen in the area and word would get back to ZANLA.

This danger of the operation being compromised by a security breach suddenly became even more apparent as, after everyone involved in the assault was in position at Lake Alexander, the Air Force decided that in view of the hot weather which was causing considerable glare and, because of the smoke of numerous grass fires in the base area, their aircraft wouldn't be able to pick up the targets . . . so operations were delayed for three days to await more suitable weather conditions.

Everyone looked at each other nervously . . . the attack might turn out to be an ugly proposition anyway . . . but what if the enemy became a hundred per cent certain we were coming?

To give ourselves a cover for the large number of men in the area, the Rhodesian Light Infantry spent the next few days on mock Fireforce actions in the Makoni and Mutasa Tribal Trust Lands, in which a lot of live ammunition was used. To any observer, our cover must have appeared as we had intended . . . that they were heavily engaged in high density operations inside Rhodesia. Regrettably, we were to pay a heavy price for the deception, when a helicopter K-Car flew into some power lines, and the Officer Commanding, 3-Commando, Rhodesian Light Infantry, Major Bruce Snelgar, and the aircrew, Air Lieutenant Paddy Bate and Flight Sergeant Gary Carter, were killed.

Then, the weather came right and Com-Ops gave the word to go. The engineers got to work on breaking down the banks of the Gairezi River and readying the bed for the column to cross. We planned for it to be over and, on its way soon after first light. Then, when it was at the store, code-named Madison Square, on the outskirts of the terrorist base, the air-strike would be put in with Canberras, using Alpha bouncing bombs, and the column would go straight in.

Instead, things went wrong at the Gairezi River. When the Canberras went in to bomb the terrorist base area at 07h00, the column was still struggling to cross the river . . . only a few were over. The first vehicles attempting the crossing stuck in the mud . . . and eventually . . . every vehicle in the column had to be towed across by bulldozer . . . and this gnawed into the timings laid down.

The artillery, who, it had been anticipated, would be unlimbered and ready to open fire in support on the terrorist base when the Canberras went in, were also still at the Gairezi, waiting to cross. In fact, because of their awkwardness and the difficulty in getting them over, they were only to follow the column in afterwards.

The column was led in by three Eland armoured cars, followed by two infantry-carrying vehicles of the Armoured Car Regiment – Tango-9 and Tango-9-Alpha, and another armoured car, Major Winkler's command vehicle. After this came two infantry vehicles – Selous Scouts' callsign 71 and 71-Alpha, commanded by Lieutenant Simon Willar, then another Eland. Next in order of advance was Lieutenant Rob Guest's Selous Scouts' callsign 72 and 72-Alpha, in two vehicles carrying twenty seven men, and behind them another Eland armoured car. Following this was Selous Scouts' callsign 73 and 73-Alpha, consisting of twenty seven infantrymen commanded by Lieutenant Chris Gough. Superintendent Winston Hart, Special Branch, was accompanying him. Then came the column commander, Captain Richard Pomford, in a Pig, and behind him another Eland. Behind this Eland were two Selous Scouts' infantry vehicles each containing twenty seven men, callsign 74 and 74-Alpha, commanded by Lieutenant John Barnes. Following them were two Armoured Car Regiment infantry-carrying vehicles, and at the rear were two further Elands.

Unfortunately, because of the difficulties at the river crossing, the column became fragmented and the forward elements arrived at the store, code-named Madison Square, mid-morning, while the main column did not reach there until after 14h00 . . . seven hours after the Canberra air strike.

The column headed south from Madison Square, then east until they struck the road leading to the terrorist base, on which they headed north.

The road leading to the camp was lined with trenches which were, at first, thought to be deserted, but then a head was spotted in one, and the column slowed down and cleared some with fire as they went along, but they couldn't afford the time to slow too much.

They had meanwhile been taking desultory, although not too serious, fire from dug-in gun positions high in a line of hills to the column's right, but they had no time to stop to deal with them. Late in the afternoon the column reached the terrorist base, Richard Pomford's Headquarter element taking up a central position. In a trench clearing skirmish Trooper Gert O'Neill was killed in action.

Simon Willar with callsign 71, moved to the area touching spot height 682, callsign 72 under Lieutenant Rob Guest, also went to the left while the main column split to the right and headed for the general area of the camp at the foot of Monte Cassino, by which time it was too dark to continue operations, so they were ordered to dig-in for the night.

For the whole of the first night the entrenched main column was subjected to harassing RPG-7 and fifty seven millimetre recoilless rifle fire, coming from the base of the Monte Cassino area, as well as some effective and accurate mortaring from an eighty two millimetre emplacement at spot height 805. We suffered no further casualties, but many men suffered numerous narrow brushes with death.

All night too they heard the clank of shovels in the heights above, as the enemy strengthened their positions.

During that night the Rhodesian Light Infantry's stop groups had a lively time as terrorists escaping eastwards continually bumped them. To the west, where they were supposed to have fled, the Selous Scout pseudo operators were having a quiet time, as none of the enemy came their way.

Early in the morning of the second day, considerable enemy movement was seen on the top of Monte Cassino. It became apparent they were fire-controlling the other heavy weapons in the camp from there, as the Scouts found themselves under fairly heavy fire from all directions.

Then, at 08h30, the cloud came down and obscured their vision and the armoured cars moved up to cover us with their heavy weapons. It had become rapidly clear we were going to have to fight to clear the base . . . and it could easily be a protracted battle.

So, the Hunters, armed with thousand pounder Golf bombs, were asked to come in, when the cloud cleared, to reduce the morale of the defenders and, if possible, take out their heavy weapon positions.

Unknown to us at this time, hill 761, which became known as Ack-Ack hill, had a lot of weapons, very strategically placed, where they could lend support to all positions on Monte Cassino and cover all tracks leading up it.

At 13h00, a Lynx spotter followed by the Hunters, came in through an incredibly dense flak curtain . . . they were heroes indeed . . . and the Hunters dropped sixteen one thousand pound Golf bombs on the enemy gun positions.

By 15h00, hill 774 had been captured by Chris Gough and his men. There were four or five abandoned enemy positions there from which the heavy weapons had been removed. From there the Scouts had a commanding view of the top of Monte Cassino and the enemy positions there, onto which they directed mortar fire and more strikes by the Hunters.

The terrorists based up there had an energetic time running from the trenches to their bunkers every time mortar fire was called for or, when the Air Force came to sort them out.

While this was going on the Armoured Car Regiment infantry, under the personal command of Major Winkler, independently attempted to scale Monte Cassino to launch an attack. But they were forced to retreat in a hurry when they were about two thirds of the way up, as the guns on Ack-Ack hill opened up on them with extreme accuracy, and the terrorists on top added their fire and started rolling grenades down upon them too.

Earlier in the afternoon, Captain Peter Stanton was helicoptered out of the battle area with a wounded capture for interrogation who, unfortunately, died of his wounds on the flight back to Grand Reef.

Peter Stanton, feeling fairly depressed at the loss of this capture, as he had received little information to update the intelligence picture, reported his presence at the Com-Ops' operations room. Then, as he was leaving, he noticed an African squatting on his haunches outside. He was not under guard.

'Who is he?' he asked an Army Intelligence officer who was relaxing with others in a tent nearby.

'Oh, he's just a local picked up by someone and sent back for interrogation in case he knew anything.'

'And did he?' asked Peter Stanton, his years as a Police officer causing alarm bells to ring in his mind . . . there were no locals living anywhere near the base . . . anyone found in the general area *had* to be a terrorist.

'No,' said the Intelligence officer, 'doesn't know a thing.'

'I think I'll have a chat with him,' said Peter.

'Be my guest,' invited the Intelligence officer.

Peter took the African back to his caravan, which was parked near the airstrip.

The man looked at Peter and Peter looked at him . . . and the *local* knew immediately that his free and easy hours of fooling Army Intelligence officers were a thing of the past.

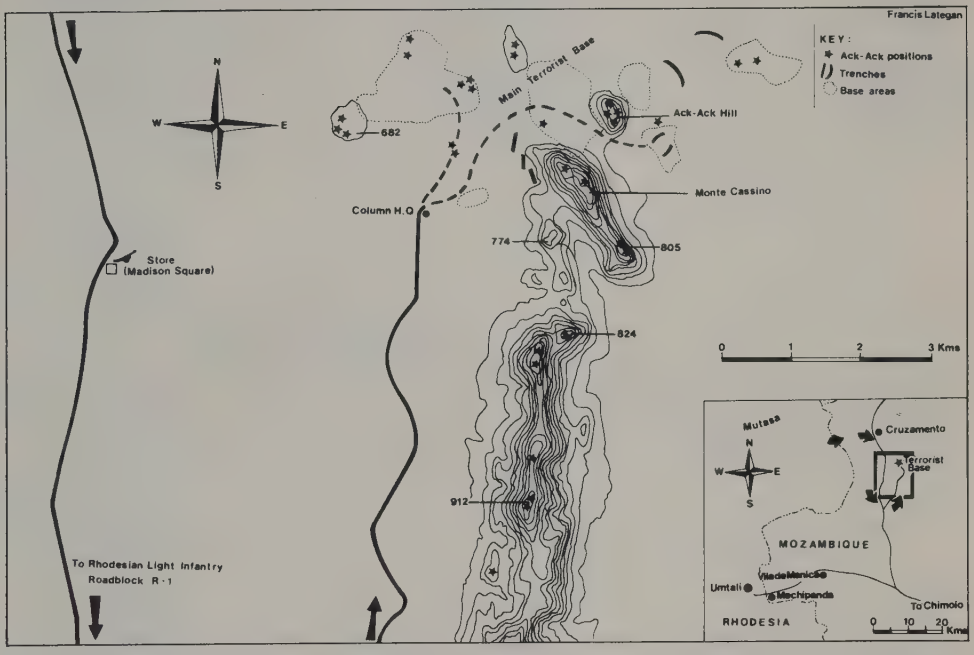
As he interrogated him, it soon became apparent to Peter Stanton the man was a trained terrorist . . . and, an hour after that he sensed he was a lot more than just that.

Peter carefully put certain facts to him. The man saw the game was up and blurted out who he was . . . a senior ZANLA officer. His particular responsibility at the base was the camp defences . . . in fact, he was the commander of the camp defences . . . the most important possible prisoner they could have captured, at that time!

He was immediately interrogated to find out what was in the camp, and every aspect about the camp and who was to be found there. A full report was put together during the night.

That night, the Rhodesian Light Infantry stop groups to the east, again had a lively time with numerous escaping terrorists infiltrating past their positions.

At first light on the third day, after consolidating on hill 774, Lieutenant Simon Willar, callsign 71, set out to clear the terrorist heavy weapons which had been harassing the attackers and moved straight down the ridge line from point 824 to 912, the Hunters striking each high point individually before the infantry went in to attack. This was too much for the enemy and they soon evacuated their positions and, other than a couple of skirmishes, Simon's callsign accomplished their task without too much trouble.



L13. Operation *Miracle*. Attack on ZANLA terrorist base in Chimoio circle: September/October, 1979.

Peter Stanton had meanwhile returned to the base camp with his capture and reported to Colonel Bate of the Rhodesian Light Infantry, whom he briefed on what was in the camp and what to expect. In particular, that on top of Monte Cassino itself was a company of highly trained artillery personnel . . . and . . . that the camp was very large and could have had, at the time of the attack, any number of terrorists from four thousand to ten thousand within its environs. He confirmed too that the heavy weapons had been sited by Soviet advisers and that a large number of terrorists trained in Tanzania and Red China had recently arrived there. He mentioned that Rex Nhongo had been in the camp at the time of the attack, but that he had immediately called for his vehicle so he could escape. Unfortunately for him, his driver panicked and crashed the vehicle into a tree. It hadn't been found until then – but the capture took Peter and showed him the crashed vehicle to confirm the truth of what he had been saying.

Colonel Bate and Peter Stanton then went into the base camp area and reported everything to Richard Pomford, the column commander.

SUPREME ARMY

MILITARY HIGH COMMAND
Army Commander
Deputy Army Commander
Chief of Staff
Deputy Chief of Staff
Chief of Operations
Deputy Chief of Operations
Chief of Communications
Deputy Chief of Communications
Second Deputy Chief of Communications
Logistics
Deputy Logistics
Personnel
Deputy Personnel
Chief of Engineering
Deputy Chief of Engineering
Second Deputy Chief of Engineering

NORTHERN FRONT-1

Command breakdown identical to the illustration under Northern Front-3.

NORTHERN FRONT-2

Command breakdown identical to the illustration under Northern Front-3.

NORTHERN FRONT-3

FRONTAL COMMAND (At F
Base in Zambia)
Commander
Deputy Commander
Commissar
Deputy Commissar
Logistics
Deputy Logistics
Medical
Deputy Medical
Security
Deputy Security

COMMUNICATIONS STAFF
(± 3 men operating HF radio link to Lusaka)

REGIONAL COMMAND (Ins
Rhodesia)
Commander
Deputy Commander
Commissar
Deputy Commissar
Logistics
Deputy Logistics
Medical
Deputy Medical
Security
Deputy Security
Communications Staff

ZONE (± 100 men – split
into units as below)
Commander
Deputy Commander
Commissar
Deputy Commissar
Logistics
Deputy Logistics
Medical
Security
Deputy Security
Communications

ZONE SECTION
(± 30 men)

UNIT
(± 6–10 men)
Commander
Deputy Commander
Commissar
Deputy Commissar
Logistics
Security
Medical
± 3 soldiers

UNIT
(± 6–10 men)
Commander
Deputy Commander
Commissar
Deputy Commissar
Logistics
Security
Medical
± 3 soldiers

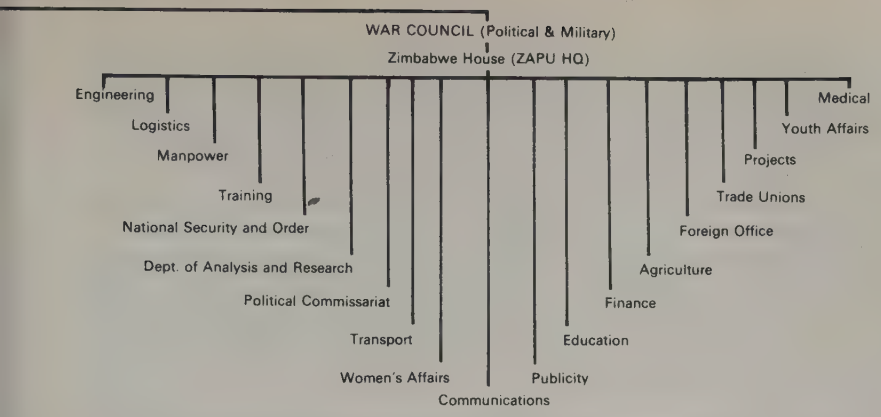
UNIT
(± 6–10 men)
Commander
Deputy Commander
Commissar
Deputy Commissar
Logistics
Security
Medical
± 3 soldiers

Z
(

UNIT
(± 6–10 men)
Commander
Deputy Commander
Commissar
Deputy Commissar
Logistics
Security
Medical
± 3 soldiers

DER – JOSHUA NKOMO

L14. Organisation of ZIPRA.



SOUTHERN FRONT-1

Front not brought into operation.

SOUTHERN FRONT-2

Front not brought into operation.

SOUTHERN FRONT-3

Command breakdown identical to the Illustration shown under Northern Front-3.

NOTE: This goes down to guerilla units in the field. The latecomers, the so-called Regulars, had a normal conventional military organisation.

Compiled by
FRANCIS LATEGAN

ections and then down

ON

ZONE SECTION
(± 30 men)

UNIT
(± 6–10 men)
Commander
Deputy Commander
Commissar
Deputy Commissar
Logistics
Security
Medical
± 3 soldiers

ander
issar

UNIT
(± 6–10 men)
Commander
Deputy Commander
Commissar
Deputy Commissar
Logistics
Security
Medical
± 3 soldiers

UNIT
(± 6–10 men)
Commander
Deputy Commander
Commissar
Deputy Commissar
Logistics
Security
Medical
± 3 soldiers

UNIT
(± 6–10 men)
Commander
Deputy Commander
Commissar
Deputy Commissar
Logistics
Security
Medical
± 3 soldiers

At 10h00, it was decided to mount another attack on Monte Cassino and, for this purpose, two troops of Selous Scouts, callsign 74, commanded by Lieutenant John Barnes, and callsign 72 under Lieutenant Chris Gough, were placed under the overall command of the latter officer. Other troops given to Chris to assist with the attack, was a thirty-man Rhodesian Light Infantry troop from 3-Commando, commanded by Captain Bobby Harrison.

At the base of the hill they advanced with Selous Scouts' callsign 73 in the lead, the Rhodesian Light Infantry next, and Selous Scouts' callsign 74 in the rear.

Next to Chris Gough, the attack commander, walked Superintendent Winston Hart, Special Branch, and they scaled the hill together. Chris, in those far off days which seemed a hundred years ago, had been one of the passengers in that first Army truck to be blown up by a landmine at Mkumbura . . . and . . . Winston Hart had been the first member of the British South Africa Police to have attained that dubious distinction.

It had certainly been a long war!

At the base of the hill a Scout spotted movement in one of the bunkers, and Chris called for a bunker bomb, which was promptly tossed in by John Gardner as the Scouts ducked for cover . . . then, everyone went cold as the bunker bomb bounced out again – thrown back by the enemy. For a few frozen moments the Scouts hugged the ground, but nothing happened, it was a dud.

John Gardner lobbed in another which, this time, wasn't a dud. But, as it exploded, a terrorist leaped from the bunker and tore off into the bush. A hail of gunfire followed him and cut him down.

Rumours later said he was white and had blue eyes, but he was an African. If he was a little white this can be explained, for playing catch with bunker bombs is, to say the least, a fairly whitening pastime.

Chris thought it probable that as one trench at the bottom had been occupied by the enemy, it was likely those along the main path up would be occupied too, so he ordered the ascent be made the hard way – up the baldest and steepest face, and callsign 73 and the Rhodesian Light Infantry, set out to do this. Callsign 74, under John Barnes, were ordered to go, more cautiously, up the western route, clearing all the fortifications on the way up.

Just before the main assault force reached the top, a barrage of mortar fire was brought down on the enemy positions above them.

Then, as the firing ceased, a jangling noise came from over a rocky lip above the advancing Rhodesians, but they gripped their weapons and their courage and clambered up the last few metres, and scrambled into the main terrorist strong point, their weapons at the ready. But no one was there . . . the position had been abandoned by the enemy. The clanking had been caused by some old tin cans being rustled by the breeze.

Before they had reached the top, the Armoured Car Regiment, confirmed they had cleared the adjoining Ack-Ack hill with their infantry . . . it had also been abandoned . . . so the two most important features in the terrorist base were in our hands.

The sight which greeted the eyes of Chris and his men when they reached the top of Monte Cassino, was reminiscent of scenes from the trenches of the western front in World War-1. The place had been abandoned by the enemy – probably the previous afternoon . . . but they could hardly be blamed. The trees there had been stunted and the earth and rocks stirred into a hellish scene, by our ground and air bombardments.

The enemy had abandoned most of their equipment, heavy or otherwise, and a few of their dead were still in the trenches and bunkers. But it was clear others had been thrown into rocky fissures and shallowly covered by thin blankets of earth, as an unmistakable stench hung over the hill telling a story of many more deaths.

Tragically, during the course of the assault, three soldiers were seriously wounded and another, Trooper Ted Mann, killed, when a captured weapon exploded while being made safe. All of the wounded were quickly casevaced by helicopter, and their lives saved by emergency surgery.

Meanwhile, in the terrorist camp areas below Monte Cassino, Peter Stanton was being given a conducted tour by his prisoner. Everywhere they walked was deserted. The base was large . . . much larger than had until then been thought . . . it extended well north into ground which had been covered by cloud, when the Canberra had made its photographic run.

Only a few terrorist corpses were found, although the vegetation was stunted and leaf-stripped from the air strikes. Nevertheless, there were few signs to indicate the terrorists had withdrawn in confusion. In fact, to the contrary, everything pointed to a relatively orderly withdrawal. Neatly tied up bundles were discovered at various points in the camp, as if they had been overlooked at the last minute by the owners when leaving, and little personal equipment had been abandoned.

Although well prepared for some resistance or, at least, some sniping from isolated terrorist pockets, all was quiet while Peter checked out the base . . . which took the remaining hours of daylight.

It was apparent the camp could well have housed ten thousand ZANLA terrorists as the capture said. The kitchen area alone contained twelve forty-four gallon drums of *sadza* – mealie meal pap . . . which had been abandoned . . . and that was a lot of lunch in anyone's language.

There was an extensive trench system, which laced all over the base, large numbers of bunkers, abandoned anti-aircraft positions containing weapons ranging from the Russian 12,7 millimetre, to the thirty seven millimetre. The whole place was well-used and gave a general appearance of military orderliness.

Huge stocks of canned food, medical supplies, ammunition and military equipment were discovered.

One thing had become very clear, the base escape drills hadn't involved fleeing westwards towards Rhodesia . . . they had involved fleeing eastwards to Chimoio! Their drill was to make for a road to the east of the camp, where, probably, even then the FRELIMO and ZANLA vehicles from Chimoio were busily patrolling and picking up the numerous unscathed survivors as they emerged from the bush.

So, at least we knew why the Rhodesian Light Infantry to the east had been seeing most of the action, and why the Selous Scouts' pseudo groups, covering the Rhodesian border to the west, had picked up nothing. Maybe a column should be sent to that road . . . they should get easy pickings. But, it was too late to do anything that day. So all the troops settled down in the positions they were occupying for the night.

At 02h00, a hoarse whispered message came over the radio to me from Romeo-1, the callsign of a young Rhodesian Light Infantry lieutenant, who was blocking the road to the south of the base, to stop any interference in our attack by FRELIMO or ZANLA.

'Tanks,' he said, 'there's three Russian tanks coming down the road . . . and a company of Freds walking with them!'

Then I heard them too . . . even from my hill position . . . as silent armour has yet to be invented.

'What's that?' asked Chris Gough on top of Monte Cassino, cocking an ear to the unfamiliar clanking sounds being carried to them on the night air.

'I think I know,' said Winston Hart uneasily, for he had experienced them before. 'They're bringing up tanks!'

I instructed Major Winkler to take his armoured cars out to reinforce Romeo-1's road block position on the road. I said he was to get his Elands into hull-down positions in the general area, where they could use their powerful guns to best effect . . . because clearly, they couldn't sally forth and tackle tanks – they wouldn't have stood a chance, as their armour was too thin.

Romeo-1 then called the ranges of the tanks to the Rhodesian Artillerymen crewing the old twenty five pounders at Madison Square.

The first shots were wide, and the trigger-happy FRELIMO crews of the Soviet T-54's opened up at once in any direction where Africa was likely to be found. A large number of their overshoots . . . for that is what they were . . . thunderclapped amidst the entrenchments and

fortifications on top of Monte Cassino, giving Chris and his men a hard time as they cowered in the trenches.

The next salvo from the twenty five pounders landed closer to target, and then they straddled the FRELIMO tanks and their accompanying infantry. The infantry, according to Romeo-1, scattered in every direction while the tanks hurriedly turned tail and fled back towards the safety of Vila de Manica, one of their number belching a tail of thick oily smoke.

I requested an aerial reconnaissance for first light and they were spotted, one of them very much the worse for wear, travelling towards Chimoio. Unfortunately, before an air strike could be brought down onto them, they were lost while being temporarily out of observation, in an area of thick bush.

By this time all units were in the process of withdrawing to Rhodesia, and due to the tanks and the general confusing situation at the time, it wasn't considered that Peter Stanton's assessment, as to where we would find the best killing ground for the bulk of the escaping terrorists, was strong enough to disturb the troop withdrawals back to Rhodesia. In retrospect though, it is highly probable his conclusions were correct.

While the troops had been on top of Monte Cassino, two tame baboons, apparently abandoned by the terrorists, had made themselves at home with the Scouts. At first, they were thought of as merely pets, but then, it was noticed that long before the noise of approaching aircraft could be detected by the human ear, the baboons, who must have experienced air strikes before, started fidgeting and chuntering in terror . . . which indicated the interesting possibility that the terrorists had been using them as living air raid warnings, to give them time to get into shelter before the bombs started to fall.

After the column had withdrawn back to Rhodesia, a number of Selous Scout callsigns remained behind on high features . . . of which there were plenty in the vicinity . . . to monitor enemy activities.

A day later, one callsign reported that a large FRELIMO armoured column, well-equipped with Soviet-supplied twenty two millimetre anti-aircraft weapons, had appeared and pasted the long-vacated Monte Cassino feature with what appeared to be extreme accuracy, and had then left and moved to the village of Christo Mento to the north, where they were based up.

The assessment was that it was likely FRELIMO intended to carry out a reprisal attack on Ruda Security Force base, just over the border inside Rhodesia, and Com-Ops ordered their intentions be diverted by a series of air strikes.

During the first air strike, one Canberra bomber was badly damaged by ground fire. It nearly made it, but went into the ground after flying twenty kilometres. The crew, Air Lieutenants Kevin Pinky and J. J. Strydom, died.

Then, in another strike afterwards, a Hunter was hit by ground fire causing it to crash into the armoured column, causing much destruction, but killing the pilot, Air Lieutenant Brian Gordon.

ZIPRA's Last Throw: Attempt to Mount Conventional Invasion of Rhodesia: Operation Dice and Various others Mounted to Frustrate it.

In Lusaka, the main ZAPU Party Headquarters was encompassed in Zimbabwe House in Conakry Road, Emasdale, which was where Joshua Nkomo and most of the Party hierarchy had their offices.

Almost all of the rank and file workers at Zimbabwe House, lived at Makeni township, south of Lusaka, in a number of houses known as Makeni 1, 2 and 3 and Makeni Clinic, which were all rented by ZAPU.

In Roma township, completely separate from Zimbabwe House, was a place known as the Vatican, the top secret headquarters of ZAPU's intelligence service . . . the Department of National Security and Order, headed by Dumiso Dabengwa, where they kept their secret records, and from where they mounted all their secret operations. The Vatican also controlled a

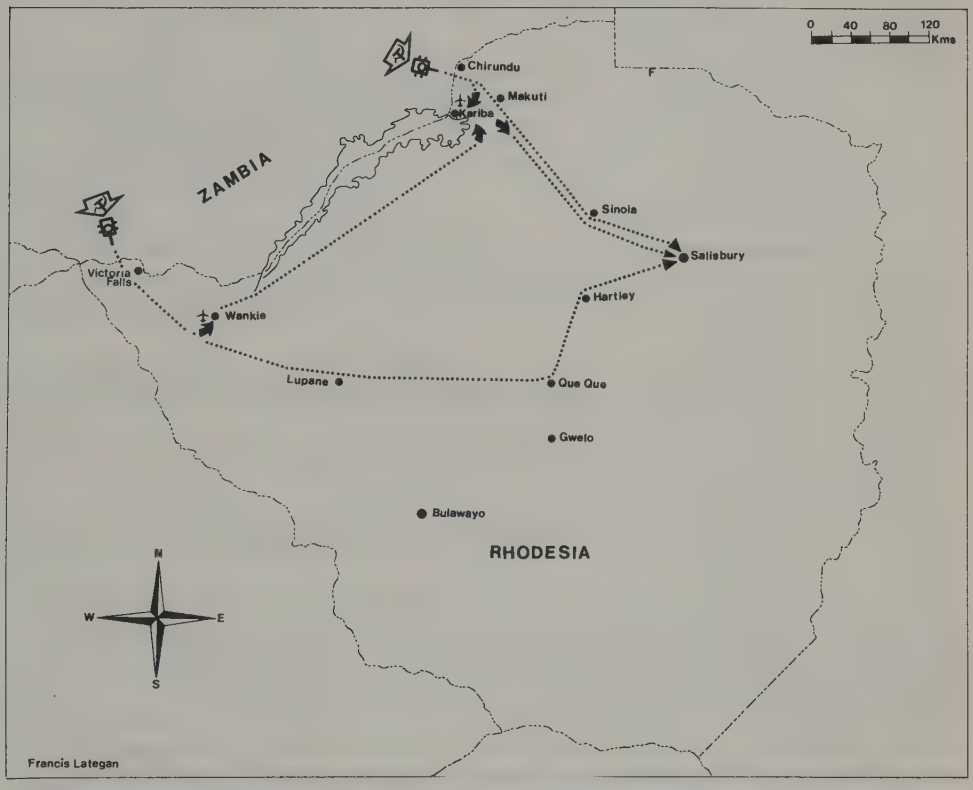
number of safe houses in various south Lusaka townships, from where they clandestinely deployed urban terrorist groups into Bulawayo, Salisbury and Que Que.

West of Lusaka, just outside the town, was the War Council Headquarters, known as The Rock, and a few kilometres away from that was the Military Headquarters.

The War Council, which included Cuban and Soviet advisers, held regular security and War Council meetings at The Rock, which were attended by Joshua Nkomo, Dumiso Dabengwa and representatives from the Military High Command Headquarters.

The Military Headquarters was the main operational nerve centre for ZIPRA operations into Rhodesia. It was there that the main communications set-up, put in by the Soviets and run by Russian trained ZIPRA operators, Russian advisers and the rest of the Military High Command, were based. All military operations were planned and run from there.

A Cuban presence had been established at the Cuban Embassy just south of The Rock, from where a number of Cuban advisers, posing as diplomatic personnel, used to commute on a daily basis to the War Council, to advise on military strategies.



L15. Map showing Soviet devised ZIPRA strategy for sending armoured columns into Rhodesia under an air umbrella of MIG jets, to capture Salisbury, defeat the Security Forces and crush ZANLA.

In Sheki-Sheki street, was an annex to Zimbabwe House, which was generally known as Sheki-Sheki. This housed a number of the departments of the Party Headquarters ... those which worked in close liaison with the military, like the Department of Analysis and Research, the Political Commissariat, the people responsible for the presses on which they printed Marxist propaganda in the way of booklets, pamphlets, leaflets, etc., and the Department of Security, which was the name of ZIPRA's military police.

The Department of Analysis and Research, was the very effective counter propaganda weapon

of ZAPU, headed by Dumiso Dabengwa and assisted by Jeremy Brickhill, a white Rhodesian, who used to analyse operations, reports from the front, publications and books from Rhodesia and abroad, and organise assistance from overseas sympathisers, organisations such as the Defence and Aid, Amnesty International, South African War Assistance Committee, the South African Communist Party, South African African National Congress, the Palestine Liberation Organisation, various other closely linked terrorist organisations and the Soviet Union.

They were responsible for analysing everything and providing the Military High Command with intelligence reports, as well as up-to-date analysis on the capabilities of the Rhodesian Security Forces, their communications, their vital roads, bridges and that type of thing.

In the early months of 1979, a high powered Soviet military delegation arrived in Lusaka to try and reorganise the not very successful ZIPRA war effort inside Rhodesia.

The Russians called together a top level conference at the Military High Command Headquarters, bringing in all frontal commanders so they could be comprehensively briefed.

Afterwards, they re-vamped the complete strategy of the ZIPRA war effort, emphasizing their need to go onto a conventional war footing, but in the meantime, making the maximum use of their existing guerilla-trained terrorists, to commence paving the way for entry into Rhodesia of the conventional forces.

The decision was to mass as many regular troops as possible and train them to operate as a fully-fledged conventional army of at least five battalions, effective in Soviet motorised infantry techniques, and use them to crush both the Rhodesian Security Forces and ZANLA.

The theoretical overall plan involved having two bridge-heads across the Zambezi, one in the Chirundu/Kariba area and the other near Victoria Falls, either by seizing the bridges already there, or, if they were destroyed, by throwing pontoons across the river. Then, to drive in large numbers of conventionally trained infantry in armoured vehicles, capable of punching their way through any opposition and seizing the airfields at Wankie and Kariba, into which they would then airlift, with the aid of Libyan transport aircraft, any of their regular forces still remaining either in Zambia or Angola.

Air support would be provided by Soviet supplied MIG fighter aircraft, piloted by ZIPRA pilots, who were to be selected and sent for pilot training, supplemented if necessary, by some volunteers . . . presumably Libyan or Cuban.

The aircraft, in fact, arrived but were never uncrated, as the situation never reached the stage where the invasion was launched.

Salisbury was the key, and had to be captured within twenty four hours of the invasion commencing . . . they knew that if they didn't achieve this, they would definitely fail and their columns would be decimated.

To achieve this, they intended to drive one armoured column from Wankie, via the back way to Que Que, and then on to Salisbury. One directly from Chirundu to Salisbury, and the other from Wankie to Kariba and then to Salisbury. Bulawayo did not worry them as that was in Matabeleland, their tribal power-base.

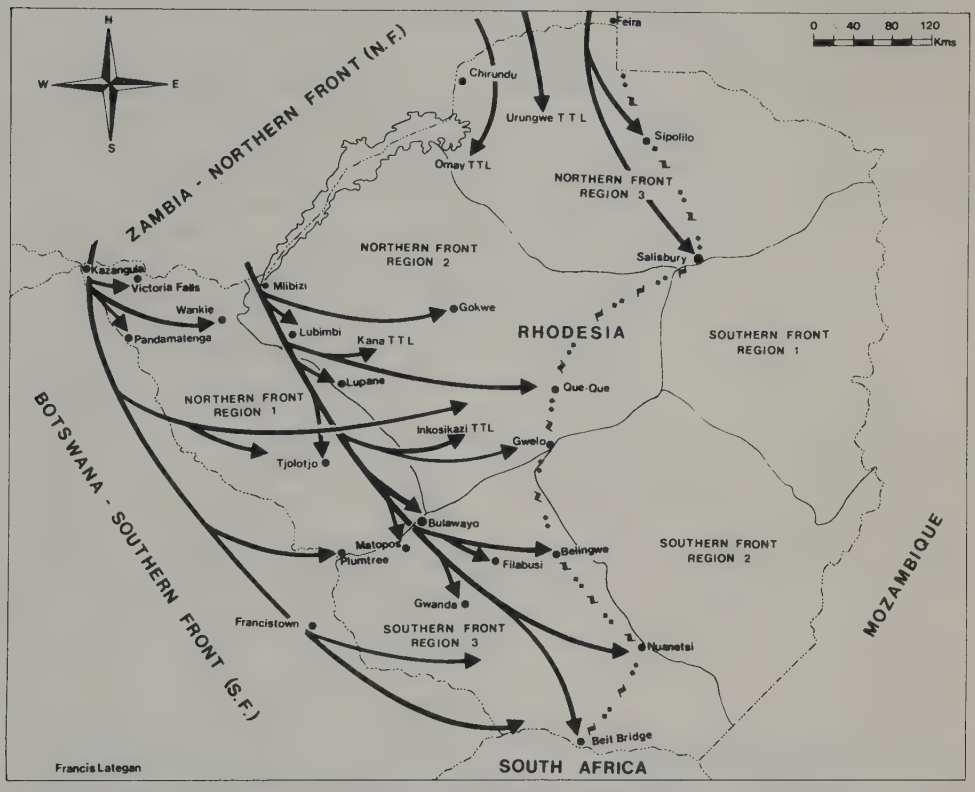
It had been this decision which had initiated training by the Russians of conventional ZIPRA forces at Mulungushi . . . the former Zambian Army barracks . . . and at Boma camp at Luso in Angola. As the year had progressed, concentrations of conventionally trained ZIPRA forces began to build up, both in Angola and certainly in Zambia, and started to pose an obvious security threat to Rhodesia.

Then, serious problems began being experienced by the ZIPRA guerillas in southern Matabeleland because of the threat being posed by ZANLA, who were rapidly expanding their military influence westwards across the south of the country from Mozambique. They had reached the Bulawayo to Plumtree railway line by the time of the cease-fire.

To make things more difficult for them, ZANLA were receiving extensive personnel and weaponry supplies, while the ZIPRA guerillas were suffering from severe shortages of ammunition and other supplies in the field, due to a completely disorganised re-supply system from Zambia. This was due not to real shortages, but to the commanders of regular formations

in camps around Lusaka, keeping the best for camp defences because of their ever-present haunting fear of Rhodesian raids. So, generally, even when the guerillas did get resupplies, it was never enough and mostly inferior.

The guerilla groups inside Rhodesia were, certainly not sufficiently well organised to effectively take on ZANLA as well as the Rhodesian Security Forces, mainly due to a lot of dissension between the various guerilla groups. And, not only did they continually squabble amongst themselves, but they also shared a feeling of hate and resentment for the external regular groups, whom they considered, with some justification, were leading the life of Riley in Zambia . . . while they suffered and died in the field.



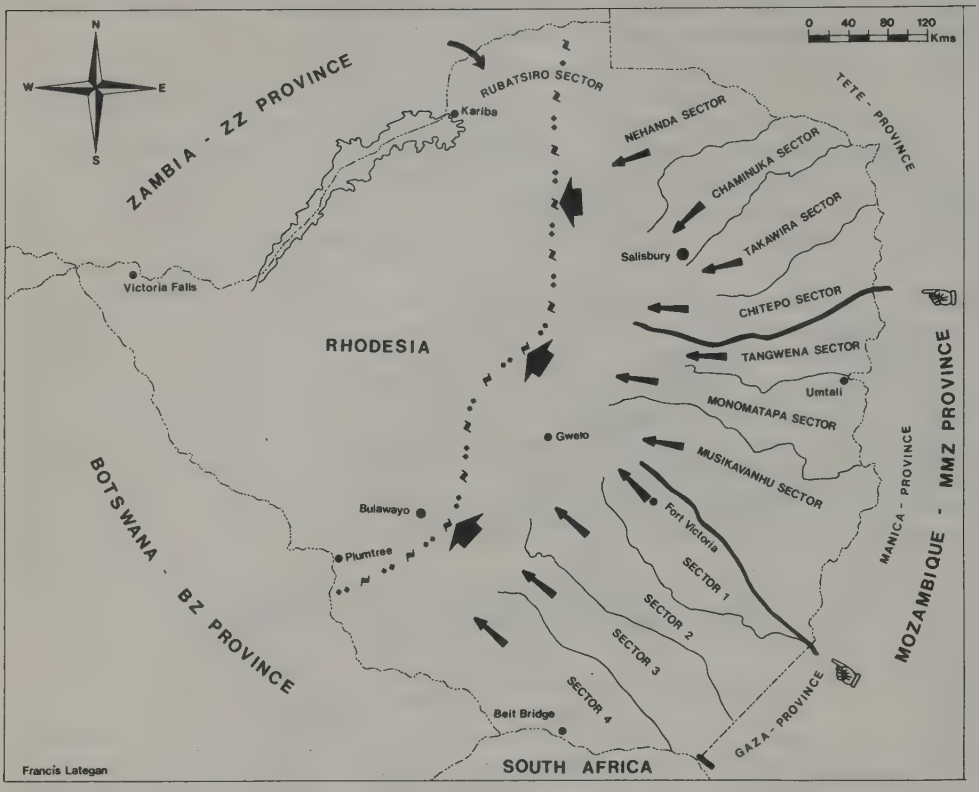
L16. Map of Rhodesia showing areas infiltrated by ZIPRA terrorists, their routes of infiltration and their *Fronts* or operational areas as at the end of the war. Southern Fronts, Region 1 and 2, were not brought into operation due to ZIPRA having no rear-base facilities granted to them by Mozambique. Although many areas were heavily infiltrated by ZIPRA they never controlled any area of Rhodesia.

Dissident ZIPRA guerilla groups became commonplace, particularly in the Lupani, Que Que and Gokwe areas. Notable ones were led by Lipson Mangarirani and Sandhlana Mafuta, who openly defied orders from military leaders in Lusaka, preferring to fight the war in their own way.

There were large-scale desertions too of individual terrorists, who resorted to banditry or abandoned their units and went to the Bulawayo African townships, or hid their weapons and exfiltrated to Botswana for recycling to Zambia.

Generally, and certainly compared to ZANLA, all ZIPRA internal terrorist activity had been haphazard, unco-ordinated and thus fairly ineffectual. They could be said to have occupied large areas of Tribal Trust Land but, generally, they had shown little aggression, indicating to the contrary, a marked preference for a quiet life amongst the tribal locals.

When they first came up against ZANLA in Matabeleland . . . the home of the Matabele and until then their undisputed sphere of influence . . . it gave them a rude and unpleasant shock. It came as an even ruder shock when they found too, that generally, they were getting the worst of the engagements and were having to make all-out efforts to retain a toehold in certain areas, let alone make an eastwards advance into Mashonaland. It was not long before they found they were spending more time fighting ZANLA in the Filabusi, Gwanda, Beit Bridge and Matopos areas, than they were fighting the Security Forces.



L17. Map of Rhodesia showing operational Sectors of ZANLA as at the ceasefire. Rubatsiro Sector was the first but this was abandoned because rear base facilities in Zambia were withdrawn. On commencement of the main terrorist onslaught in December, 1972, Nehanda, Chaminuka and Takawira Sectors were brought into operation. The other operational Sectors, working south from Chitepo to Sector 4, gradually came into operation as rear bases in Mozambique were developed after the Portuguese collapse. The boundaries of the ZANLA operational Sectors encompassed areas where ZANLA terrorist groups were resident after the tribesmen had been *organised and politicised,* a euphemism for *effectively intimidated.* They were open-ended becasue ZANLA was still advancing west at the time of the ceasefire. The area beyond, up to the arrowed line, was the limit to where their reconnaissance groups and political commissars were operating.

Needless to say, the Selous Scouts were continually in the middle, stirring things up all the time.

Once the ZIPRA High Command became not only aware, but also began to appreciate the seriousness to them of ZANLA's advance westwards, they started committing their regulars . . . often in formations as large as company strength . . . into Rhodesia to bolster the guerilla forces.

However, this didn't have the desired effect, as once they were inside the country, the local guerilla commanders refused to bury their dislike of the regulars, and they split them up from the company and platoon formations they had been trained to operate in, and dissipated their

strengths by distributing them among their own units as normal guerilla section members and, once that was done, they soon assumed the couldn't-care-less attitude of the rest of the guerillas, and became just as ineffective.

It should be stressed though that company formations would have fared little better . . . a point overlooked by ZIPRA's inflexible Soviet mentors . . . as large groups too invariably fell quick victims to the ever-watchful and always-efficient Rhodesian Security Forces.

They received particularly severe maulings at the hands of the Rhodesian Security Forces at or near certain infiltration points, mainly in the Mlibizi, Lubimbi and Lupane areas and west of Victoria Falls, across the horn. They lost large quantities of weapons, including heavy weapons, ammunition and sorely needed supplies, due to the seemingly uncanny successes of the Rhodesians in contacting them either at crossing points, or after they had only been in the country for a few days.

It was good work but, in reality, nothing uncanny. ZIPRA were being trained by the Soviets on their usual rigid pattern and probably, to them anyway, any area of African bush seemed to a degree mysterious and easy to move through without detection . . . even though this view certainly wasn't held either by the ZIPRA personnel or by the Rhodesians. The consequences were that ZIPRA regulars, on Soviet orders, infiltrated at set crossing points, and the culling of their numbers by the Security Forces became a daily, almost boring routine.

Generally, because of their lack of subtlety and, provided one is willing to accept the evidence of one's eyes at face value, there is nothing particularly mysterious about Soviet tactics which are rigidly bolted to their strategies . . . both are one and the same, in fact, as they try to control tactics from the top, giving the man in the field little flexibility.

Nkomo also had amongst his regular troops deployed in Rhodesia, at least three companies of South African African National Congress terrorists – SAANC.

It should be borne in mind that since the late sixties they had trained and lived in the same camps as ZIPRA, as well as deploying with them. The Matabele, after all, had more affinity linguistically with the tribes of South Africa than did the Shona, having been, in the first instance, a breakaway Zulu faction.

The SAANC had moved into Rhodesia, across the horn, and made their way to the Gwanda area in sections of ten. The original intention had been for them to carry on and enter South Africa where they would again combine into large groups and commence terrorist attacks.

Instead, once they were at Gwanda, they were needed in the fight to stop ZANLA's encroachment into Matabeleland . . . and were split up amongst ZIPRA guerilla sections to reinforce them.

The result was that, at the end of the war, some three hundred of them had re-combined into their regular formations at Gwanda . . . and were ready to continue their interrupted journey to South Africa.

Then, as often happens in international politics, there was a gentle hint here and a gritty not so gentle hint there . . . and the ever-discreet British organised for them to be flown by the RAF back to Zambia, before their presence soured the general euphoria, that they certainly, although very few Rhodesians, were feeling.

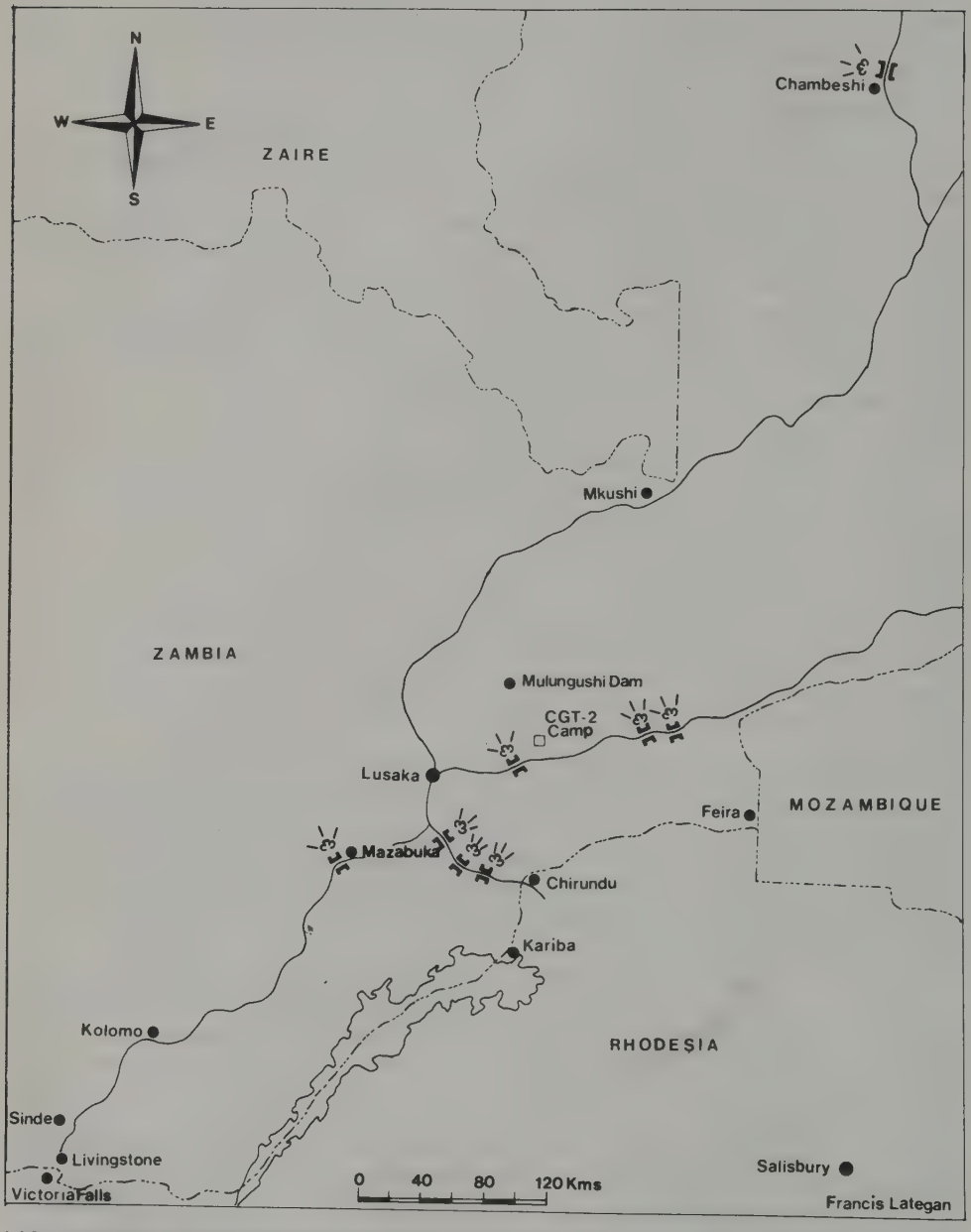
Towards the middle of the year as an increasing number of ZIPRA regulars became trained, Nkomo, on the direction of his Soviet and Cuban friends, began concentrating his whole Army at CGT-2 camp in Zambia. It was not long before intelligence reports indicated their numbers were approaching twenty thousand . . . and there were more in Angola. Two very large convoys had already arrived from Luso in Angola . . . while the armoured vehicles to be supplied by Russia, via the Zambian Army as a cover, were beginning to trickle in.

This, from the Soviet and ZIPRA point of view, was a fairly grave mistake, as the Zambians had sticky fingers, and a lot of the equipment stuck very effectively to them, and went astray.

The knowledge of the rapid growth of CGT-2 camp gave Com-Ops considerable concern. The twenty thousand ZIPRA regulars concentrated there was considered as too tough a nut for us to crack by a conventional assault.

At approximately the same time, while ZIPRA's invasion plans were still embryonic, the approaching possibility of all-party talks to find a settlement at Lancaster House, London, put temporary paid to their plans, as they were not immediately ready to implement them.

Suddenly, they came to the realisation that if there were talks, they would need a firmer base inside the country than had existed up until then and they decided, as an emergency measure, to push as many terrorists as possible into Rhodesia, so they could quickly get their murderous claws



L18. Map showing the Rhodesian Security Force's successful strategy used to defeat plans for the massive Soviet-backed armoured invasion of Rhodesia by ZIPRA.

into the tribal population in competition with ZANLA, in order that when and if a cease-fire was announced, they would be able to produce the largest number of armed men from the bush, to prove they had the largest amount of internal support.

Com-Ops ordered our immediate strategy should be directed towards limiting ZIPRA's ability to mount a conventional attack, by stopping their armoured forces from getting to launch points along the Kariba Lake and the Zambezi river, and to prevent a build-up of ZIPRA troops and supplies which would be needed, before any crossing into Rhodesia took place.

The best way to stop the movement of the armoured columns southwards was to blow all the major bridges on the main trunk routes and thus bring all traffic to a grinding halt. The trunk routes concerned were the Great East road from Lusaka to Kafue, the main road south from Lusaka to Chirundu, and the main road to Livingstone which junctions off that.

Reconnaissance teams had to operate widely to gather intelligence, not only on the type and volume of traffic using the various routes . . . which was a big task in itself . . . but also to keep an eye on and check afterwards to ensure the bridges were not being replaced by ferry systems, and to monitor various potential troop build-up areas, to ensure we always stayed one step ahead . . . there were already many ZIPRA company and battalion positions on the Zambian shore which were known to us. Then, as well as the reconnaissance tasks, there was the actual destruction of the bridges to be carried out, ambushes to be laid, roads to be landmined, and strike forces to be kept in reserve for use on an as-and-when-needed basis.

The Special Air Service were personally handling the task of destroying the road bridges . . . they had already, some weeks before, destroyed the road and rail bridges along the Great North road linking Zambia with Tanzania, and over which the bulk of Zambian exports and imports had flowed. In addition to the bridges, they were tasked to ambush roads inside Zambia, and to hold a reserve available to deploy when and where necessary.

A portion of the Selous Scouts was made available to the Special Air Service to assist with the operation, and were given two roles to fulfil. The first was to monitor any roads, routes or camps as might be deemed necessary, and the second was to supply a strike force capable of mounting ambushes, or carrying out any other kind of offensive action, the need for which might arise, during the course of operations.

Air support, in the form of Hawker Hunters, was available on an as-and-when-required basis for close air support, Bell-205 helicopters for the main means of transportation in and out of Zambia, and Dakotas for transport purposes, or for parachuting if needed.

The Special Air Service then, in a series of slick moves, destroyed nine road bridges and the whole of Zambia ground virtually to a halt, as the Great East, the Chirundu and the Livingstone roads were effectively cut in a number of places.

As well as paralysing ZIPRA, it also left Zambia without any means of moving exports out, or bringing in imports, either by road or by rail.

Each bridge targeted for destruction was photo-reconnoitred before the operations were mounted. Additionally, where circumstances would allow, another aerial reconnaissance was carried out immediately prior to the operation itself, using Lynx aircraft, to check that nothing had changed.

The teams were carried in Bell-205 helicopters which landed on the bridges themselves, or as close to them as possible.

Road blocks were quickly set up to prevent innocent people getting to the bridges while demolitions were in progress.

Only one individual broke through a road block . . . a European travelling towards Lusaka on the Great East road . . . and he was shot dead.

Once an area had been secured, the demolition team positioned their explosive charges on the piers, the abutments and on the bridge spans themselves. Then, the detonation would take place and the teams would get back in the helicopters and leave.

They finally got the technique down to a fine art, and from the moment of landing to the time of blasting, it took them no more than fifteen minutes on site, including deplaning and unload-

ing equipment and explosives, securing the area, setting up charges, blasting, re-emplaning and departing.

Where old causeways still existed, left over from before the bridges had been built, they too were destroyed if at all possible, or else heavily mined.

There were a few very limited firefights with regular units of the Zambian Army, or with Zambian Army reservists who had been called-up at short notice to guard the bridges, but that occurred only at the very few bridges to which the Zambians managed to get troops, before the Special Air Service came in. In the majority of cases the guards arrived too late due to Zambia's slow reaction.

Both before and after the bridges were blown . . . in fact, right up until the end of the war, units of the Security Forces, including the Rhodesian Light Infantry, the Special Air Service and the Selous Scouts were continually committed into Zambia on operations designed to hinder, disrupt and where possible, stop all ZIPRA movement into Rhodesia, and many large and small unit operations were successfully carried out. Roads, especially in the border areas, were almost continually mined, ambushes were laid, reconnaissances carried out and hunter/killer patrols ranged the Zambian bush along the Zambezi River, creating havoc against ZIPRA with relative impunity.

The complete record of these operations would fill a book of its own, but would be beyond the scope of this one. The following pages show only a small, although very representative selection, of some of the Selous Scouts small unit operations in Zambia over this period.

The Reconnaissance Troop operating under Captain Andy Samuels, were hard-pressed during this time, keeping tabs on ZIPRA's movements southwards in Zambia.

Lieutenant Panebondo, destined to win the award of the Silver Cross of Rhodesia, and be recommended for, although not be awarded, Rhodesia's highest gallantry award, the coveted Grand Cross of Valour, before he was tragically killed just prior to hostilities ceasing, was a quite incredible operator.

Not for him the close-in observation scene of the normal operator . . . he preferred to really get to grips with the problem . . . by physically infiltrating the ZIPRA camps and getting his information first hand from the ZIPRA terrorists squatting around the camp fires.

He insisted on operating in his own way and he tackled each problem he came up against in an apparently slap-dash fashion . . . so slap-dash that he sometimes sent shivers of apprehension up and down the spines of his more orderly thinking European comrades, because of the risks his methods precipitated. But, Panebondo insisted that there were no risks his way . . . because slap-dash or not, it precisely coincided with the way that the normal ZIPRA *cadre* would tackle things . . . which was perhaps, why so many of them were killed!

He was a stickler for dress authenticity too. While on operations his body hygiene was enviable . . . if you were a Scout aiming for a high degree of authenticity, that is . . . he never washed and he stank quite disgustingly. He had a scraggy beard, long finger nails, long matted hair and earrings . . . his ears had been pierced, at his request, by Andy Samuels.

The Russians supplied various types of footwear to ZIPRA for use by their men, amongst which were some not terribly popular and excruciatingly uncomfortable high Cossack-style riding boots . . . but they looked better than the right thing, so he always wore them, even though it was his habit, while operational, to walk incredibly long distances through the bush, rubbing his feet into open sores and blisters against the iron-hard leather in the process.

When off operations, he sat for hours and days sometimes, talking to captures, finding out exactly what the new identification gimmicks were . . . what was happening here . . . what was happening there?

On the 28th May, he was in command of a section of seven men posing as a Zambian Army patrol, which canoed across the Zambesi river, five kilometres west of Livingstone.

He was tasked with capturing or killing the command element of ZIPRA's Northern Front-1, who were based in that area.

Once on the other side, they walked to the airfield at Livingstone and trudged it from end to end to confirm or deny that surface to air missiles were based there . . . but they found nothing.

After leaving the airfield, they walked to the Sindi plots, a matter of four or five kilometres away, and waited on the road, as they had precise information from a radio intercept that a ZIPRA Land-Rover, containing some of the command element, would be passing by on their way to a logistics' base in the near vicinity. They let it pass unmolested on the way in, but on the way out, Lieutenant Panebondo stepped out into the road and signalled it to halt, which it did.

He asked the coloured driver for his identification.

'Sam Wright . . . ZIPRA forces based near Livingstone,' the driver said.

One of the passengers in the vehicle, Bob Dongo-2, who was the Deputy Commander for Northern Front-2, became suspicious, apparently because he noticed that one of the Scouts had forgotten to shave off his moustache . . . and. . . the Zambian Army is totally clean-shaven. He went for his pistol but a watchful Sergeant Chibanda opened fire first with his own, wounding Bob Dongo-2 and killing an officer who turned out to be the Logistics Officer.

In addition to the wounded Bob Dongo-2 and the, fortunately for him, unscathed driver Sam Wright, two other ZIPRA terrorists who had been travelling in the back of the vehicle, were captured too.

They were pushed back into the Land-Rover and driven to a quiet spot from where Panebondo called for a helicopter to fly into Zambia to uplift them, which it almost immediately did . . . having been hovering about anxiously in the spray above Victoria Falls.

While waiting for it to land, the two terrorists who'd been the rear passengers in the truck, attempted to escape and were shot dead.

Bob Dongo-2, died of his wounds before he could be get to hospital for treatment.

Nevertheless, before he died, he gave some very useful information because, being the Deputy Commander, he knew everything about the ZIPRA command set-up, the location of Zambian Army units and the Lusaka Intelligence Section. More importantly, he knew the entire deployment system, which was very useful, and one particular place on the Zambesi River which he pin-pointed as being a regular crossing point, was immediately covered by armoured cars from the Armoured Car Regiment, and they soon chalked up a creditable number of ZIPRA kills.

Among the very select band of operators working in the Reconnaissance Troup, Lance Corporal Johnny Masuku who came from a good family and was well educated, but, he had that totally irresponsible, semi-criminal something about him which made it easy to believe he was a terrorist . . . or anything else shady for that matter! For transport, he generally drove his father's Rover 3500, and although, or perhaps because he was a complete confidence trickster, he was immediately loved by each and every girl who came within reach of his wicked charm and personality.

There was information of there being a ZIPRA battalion base nearby the Kabanga Mission but . . . other than a radio intercept which gave the general area of the camp as Kabanga Mission . . . there was no information as to where to find it. We had established the security was very tight, so we decided to send a pseudo callsign into Zambia, posing as an exfiltrating ZIPRA group, to find out.

The command of the group was given to Lieutenant Panebondo and amongst his *cadres* was Lance Corporal Johnny Masuku.

In order to authenticate them, we sent them first into a tribal area near Victoria Falls where they made contact with the hotly ZIPRA sympathising locals, and the tribal ladies soon set them up with the correct credentials they would need to get them by, once they crossed into Zambia.

They embroidered little handkerchiefs with the men's names on them, they embroidered their shirts, and they sewed special hats for them with loving care. In little time at all Johnny Masuku, particularly, looked like a Christmas tree, as the tribal lovelies vied and sometimes nearly fought each other in attempts to add their personal contributions, and his clothing was finally a complete kaleidoscope of emblazoned phrases like: 'I love Johnny,' and: 'Forward with the ZIPRA Forces.'

As soon as the group had returned to base, they were lined up and recent captures were brought in to examine them.

'Okay, what is wrong with them?'

These efforts paid off, as once across the Zambesi River they found themselves ultra well-received by the Zambian locals, who fed them and looked after them during their journey . . . and, just as importantly, corrected their navigation and aimed them in the right direction towards Kabanga Mission.

Eventually, in a sparsely populated area, they chanced upon a lot of spoor and Panebondo decided to sit down and wait until someone came along . . . which they did, but it was not until they had waited around for a whole day that someone came.

It was a small group of ZIPRA regulars.

'We're guerillas,' Lieutenant Panebondo announced arrogantly.

Now it must be remembered, that there was considerable rivalry and resentment in ZIPRA between the guerilla fighters and the regulars.

Panebondo stood arguing with the regulars for a few moments but, eventually, they became quite friendly.

'Where're you chaps going?' one of the regulars asked.

'Oh, we are going back to our camp at Kabanga Mission.'

'Are you?' said the regular pointing up the road. 'Well, I wouldn't take that road back if I were you, because the Rhodesians have been mining it and you could meet some ambushes on the way.' He pointed in the other direction. 'Go that way . . . by the mission . . . you'll find the guerilla camp by the first dam past it.'

Panebondo grinned quietly to himself, for he knew that the Rhodesians who had been mining the road were the Selous Scouts' support group under Lieutenant Pomford and, his other reason for feeling happy was, because he'd discovered what he'd been after . . . the situation of the ZIPRA guerilla camp.

The callsign left their new-found friends and moved towards the camp, basing up well away from it. The next morning early, Panebondo left to carry out a solitary reconnaissance but, shortly afterwards, bumped into a security patrol of ZIPRA regulars, which caught him by surprise, particularly when all he had with him was a pistol – he didn't even have a radio.

As usual he took the initiative.

'Who is in charge here?'

'I am,' said one of the ZIPRA regulars.

'What the hell are you doing patrolling in our area . . . you regulars are not supposed to come anywhere near us . . . you know that as well as I do.'

'Well,' said the ZIPRA regular apologetically, 'we were told to patrol up here . . . this is our line of patrol . . . it's not my fault.'

'Where do you come from?' snapped Panebondo.

'Our headquarters is at the store to the north of the mission,' said the ZIPRA regular respectfully.

'I see,' said Panebondo irritably. 'Well, I'm going back to see my superior at the camp by the dam and tell him I found you regulars here. This business of regulars patrolling in our areas has got to stop . . . the next thing we'll know there'll be an accident . . . a shooting.'

For the next five days Lieutenant Panebondo spent his time walking around the five or six regular and guerilla camps to be found in the area . . . visiting the radio tents, the hospital areas, the cooking areas and the sleeping areas . . . talking to the ZIPRA terrorists as if he was one of them.

After pin-pointing everything he had visually located, he left the area and walked easily back to where he had left his callsign based up in the bush.

Panebondo was very quick of mind and meticulous, and he rarely made a mistake . . . and, if he did, he had that alertness which enabled him to cover it up immediately. Once, on one of the thirty or so in-depth reconnaissance patrols he performed in Zambia over this period, he was

walking in a ZIPRA camp, when he was approached by a man he had been at school with. Fortunately, he didn't know Panebondo had joined the Army after leaving school, but they nevertheless had a long chat, swopping stories about old times . . . there in the middle of enemy territory in Zambia . . . until they finally parted company, much to the relief of even the very cool-of-mind Lieutenant Panebondo.

Ambushes on the Lusaka to Livingstone road were left to the Selous Scouts to conduct, while the Special Air Service mounted one to the east and one to the south of Lusaka.

The initial choice for one of the ambushes was the Munali pass, but Com-Ops advised this was strictly a non-starter, as a recent radio intercept had indicated that a platoon of the Zambian Army was based up there and carrying out regular patrols.

After a lot of research and some more discussions . . . much of this involving Chris Grove . . . the area chosen for the Scout ambush was a section of road to the west of Munali Pass, and to the east of Mazabuka.

The site selected was at the top of a gradual, but very long ascent, of about one and a half kilometres . . . which, from an ambushing point of view, was ideal, as the slope ensured that any vehicle selected as a target, would be travelling at its slowest when entering the killing ground. The main draw-back was that the ambush party would have little cover in which to conceal themselves . . . only a long shallow ditch by the side of the road.

The area itself presented some problems too . . . there was a lack of hills and uninhabited bush areas where the ambushers could establish safe lying up places.

Our friends in the Special Air Service, on being told where we intended to mount our particular ambush, said it would be a strictly in and out business on our part and were convinced, because of the lack of cover, that we would be compromised within twelve hours.

The command of the ambush force of sixteen men was given to Lieutenant Andrew Kok, with Lieutenant Chris Gough as his second-in-command.

A last minute aerial reconnaissance of the target area was carried out by a Lynx aircraft to ensure the route in was clear.

We were aware of the danger of our men being observed deplaning from the helicopters, but by landing them a good distance north of the main road in the European farming area itself, we hoped to bluff any observers into assuming our target was the railway and the powerlines to the north . . . instead of the real target . . . the Great West Road, to the south.

Two sticks of eight men filed into two Bell-205 helicopters. After taking off they headed for Zambia, almost skimming the waters of Lake Kariba and bush-hopping in Zambia, until they reached the heartland of the Mazabuka farming area.

The drop off, just before last light, went as planned and after re-organising themselves on the ground, the Scouts spent the night walking south to their selected ambush position.

Andy Kok took charge of the main ambush party, and Chris Gough and his men took up position as Stop-1, approximately one and a half kilometres away, at the base of the incline.

The target for the ambush had not been chosen at random. Lieutenant Grove had told them . . . from his long hours spent watching the road . . . that once every five nights, a ZIPRA ammunition supply vehicle . . . a Russian Gaz truck . . . the re-supply vehicle for the ZIPRA Southern Front command in Botswana . . . passed along the road. It was decided to attack this . . . as by doing so, we would clearly display to ZIPRA that we could select and attack any of their vehicles at will.

With the aid of a night-sight, close observation was kept on all passing traffic, but nothing of note was seen to pass through the ambush area. At 04h30, the ambush was broken up and the men moved to a lying up place, from where they could still monitor traffic using the road during daylight hours . . . during that day they noted a number of passing ZIPRA vehicles, but saw no sign of the one they were after.

When darkness had fallen again, the ambush was remounted . . . and the Scouts spent a

miserable night in drenching rain . . . until they withdrew, still frustrated in their endeavours, to another lying up place just before first light.

One thing seemed certain . . . word had got out that the Rhodesians were out and about in Zambia, as there was a sudden and very marked increase in Zambian Army patrol activity on the road.

During the third day, a Zambian Army unit of platoon strength appeared and set up their own road block a short distance from where the Selous Scouts were lying up.

They watched with particular interest as a Scania truck . . . a ZIPRA vehicle . . . was waved through the road block without being stopped for checking.

When darkness fell, the Zambians turned their road block into an ambush . . . presumably intending to stay there for the night.

Their ambush was out of sight of the Selous Scouts' ambush position . . . although only just . . . so, Andy Kok having rated the Zambian efficiency, from first-hand observation, as decidedly low . . . decided to ignore their presence and re-mount the Scouts' ambush once more.

It can be certain that had the target ZIPRA vehicle passed through the Selous Scouts' ambush, the Zambians would have been dealt a nasty surprise . . . but fortunately for them, if not for us, the Gaz truck still didn't come . . . and the Zambians packed up and moved off at first light.

During the course of the next day two European farmers, carrrying shotguns and clearly hunting guinea fowl, strolled within a few metres of the safe-base being occupied by the Scouts, as did some European hitch hikers, but none of them noticed anything.

The next night, at 02h00, a Bedford truck passed the early warning point . . . a man was standing in the back and suddenly a spotlight blazed on . . . it was evidently the local poachers doing their nightly rounds . . . but fortunately for them, they did not shine their light at the Selous Scouts lying in concealment.

The following night . . . the sixth night . . . Andy Kok decided that if the Gaz truck didn't appear that night, he would switch the team to a daylight ambush the following morning and strike the first ZIPRA vehicle randomly unfortunate to be first along the road.

Understandably, due to the strain of being in ambush for so long, morale had started to sag . . . the men were tired . . . it wasn't easy to stay on one's toes . . . the time had nearly come to call it a day.

During the night the poachers reappeared, but this time to complicate matters, their truck broke down . . . right in the centre of the killing zone . . . and . . . it was only after some hours of tinkering with the engine that they got it started.

At about 02h00, five Land-Rovers, crammed with Zambian Army soldiers, drove past . . . we had permission to open fire on Zambian Army vehicles if no other targets were available . . . and Chris Gough was sorely tempted to pass on the message for the main ambush party to open fire . . . but, at the last moment, he decided against it, and the Zambians passed through the killing ground and disappeared from sight.

At 02h30 . . . their long days and nights of patient vigilance were rewarded by the sudden appearance of the ZIPRA Southern Front, Gaz re-supply truck . . . loaded to capacity with ammunition . . . its springs groaning under the load.

'Hit it!' said Chris.

The first RPG-7 rocket hit the radiator, the second the fuel tank and the truck blossomed into flame.

The ambush was classic . . . the target vehicle had come to a halt in the centre of the killing ground . . . and every weapon of the ambushers was used to wreak a deadly toll.

The claymore mines, pre-positioned as a back-up, in case the vehicle made it through the killing ground, were not activated.

The target vehicle burned out right where it had stopped and its several occupants were incinerated . . . other than the driver who, miraculously climbed out and streaked like a flaming torch off into the bush where he too, no doubt, soon died.

Shortly afterwards, a party of white farmers, presumably returning home late from a night out

in Lusaka, pulled up near the burning wreck . . . clearly intending to see what they could do to help.

The Scouts had little time to waste on niceties . . . and . . . the farmers left in a hurry after a few timely shots were ripped off over their heads.

There were reports of ZIPRA military vehicle movements near a mine, so an eight-man Selous Scout callsign, commanded by Sergeant Wally Insch, was sent into Zambia to mount observations on a secondary road leading to the mine to find out what was going on . . . their brief included carrying out opportunist ambushes if the situation warranted it.

The vegetation in the area was very sparse, particularly so because of the time of the year which was shortly before the rains commenced . . . there was virtually no cover at all . . . and no standing water around either . . . what's more it was very hot.

It was difficult to stay concealed and unobserved by the locals, as there were a lot of tribespeople walking around the area on foot.

Wally selected an observation point on top of a kopje, which enabled him to see well to his left and also to his right . . . overlooking completely the little winding dirt road they were interested in.

They stayed in position for five days, but noticed little ZIPRA military movement . . . the traffic was mainly water bowsers . . . a few lorries with sparse loads of military equipment . . . and . . . the occasional vehicle carrying suspicious-looking men on board, who gave the appearance of being ZIPRA soldiers . . . although none were wearing full uniform.

Then, on the sixth day, a Berliet truck passed the observation point heading north . . . it was packed with Africans . . . many wore uniform and were clearly ZIPRA soldiers.

A couple of days afterwards, the Berliet was spotted on its return journey . . . and . . . it was still packed with people assessed to be ZIPRA soldiers. Four men of Wally's callsign were ready in ambush.

'Hit it!' Wally ordered, depressing his radio transmitter button.

From what was little more than point blank range, the four Selous Scouts opened up with AK-sub machineguns, FN rifles and an RPD-light machinegun . . . it was impossible to miss, for the back of the truck was packed with people.

After they had ceased firing, the Scouts went forward and cautiously checked out the vehicle, finding the bodies of twenty-two dead people at the scene . . . but, unfortunately, only four were ZIPRA soldiers . . . the rest were civilians . . . although the Berliet was strictly a ZIPRA military vehicle.

On searching the vehicle wreckage, no weapons were found, but a considerable amount of general military equipment in the line of tentage, ZIPRA raincoats, boots and the ZIPRA log-book for the Berliet were discovered.

Wally's plan was to leave everything as it was and await a reaction from ZIPRA or the Zambians . . . there was a lorry-load of dead . . . they would have to do something . . . he seeded the area with anti-personnel mines and his group went back into ambush overlooking the area, but a few hundred metres away from the wreck.

Incredibly, the Selous Scouts stayed in position for four days without anyone approaching the area . . . nobody came, nobody at all.

From a high observation point, where constant watch was kept, some vehicles were seen approaching the general area, but they stopped, or were stopped, some two kilometres away, where they turned around, or were turned back, and returned the way they had come.

This was a strange turn of events, for they had expected the reaction of the Zambians or ZIPRA to have come at least within twelve hours . . . but nothing . . . the locals apparently guessed the Rhodesians were still there but the others, who had either the duty or at least the moral responsibility to see them off, were not interested in trying their luck.

Well, if that was the way they wanted it, Wally decided, they would just sit it out and wait. He

had the comfort of a promise of support by Hawker Hunters if he needed them, so it was unlikely he would be caught seriously short.

The Scouts stayed well away from the ambush vehicle, but the heat was devilish and the awful sickly smell of decaying corpses kept drifting on the wind towards their positions.

Then, on the fifth day came the first reaction . . . three Land-Rovers of the Zambian Special Branch or Criminal Investigation Department, drove up, and the men in them, all Africans and all in civilian clothing, debussed and set up a sixty millimetre mortar.

While the Scouts looked on with interest, the Zambians fired five or six mortar bombs to each point of the compass . . . none of which disturbed or came near the Rhodesians. It was assumed they were hoping to frighten away any enemy who might still have remained in the area. Afterwards, in a seemingly business-like manner, they dragged all the bodies from the wreckage and laid them out on the road . . . after having first gone carefully through the vehicle and the immediate area, rendering harmless every single anti-personnel mine and booby-trap the Scouts had put down with such cunning.

After completing their investigations and very efficient mine clearing exercises, they re-embussed and left . . . surprisingly, leaving the dead, still laid out on the road . . . and . . . the Selous Scouts totally mystified as to what the enemy intended next.

The next two days passed slowly, but no one returned to the area.

At this stage, four members of the stick were ordered to return to Rhodesia and after walking to a pick-up point, they were helicoptered home . . . then, only four men remained.

Having stayed so long, Wally decided to stick it out.

By the seventh day the callsign was getting low on water, and it became urgent they replenish supplies. The area was dry but one of them recalled a culvert on the road, nearby where the truck had been ambushed . . . there had been some water trapped in the pipe beneath the road.

Wally and another Scout, *Buffalo Bill* Des, cautiously made their way down to the culvert and filled their water bottles.

Then, a radio report came through from the other men in the callsign . . . two ZIPRA terrorists, both armed with AK-rifles, were walking down the road towards the wrecked vehicle.

Wally and Des immediately bolted from the culvert and went into ambush amongst the truck wreckage . . . trying to ignore the rotting stink of the dead, a hand's reach away.

They waited unmoving, but oddly, the terrorists didn't appear . . . so they just sat waiting . . . there was nothing else they could do . . . for any move at all would likely have given away their position and brought fire down on them.

Their eyes quartered the bush searching for the enemy. Des detected a movement by a shady tree near an anthill. He nudged Wally. After gazing long and hard they picked out an oblong shape . . . a human head – then another . . . so that was where they were!

They had positioned themselves to watch the bus . . . they had likely, even probably, been around for days . . . probably been dropped off by the Zambian Special Branch, when they'd been there.

The radio again crackled into life . . . another four ZIPRA terrorists were concealed to the north of the shot-up truck.

Wally and Des hugged cover . . . expectantly half hoping the terrorists would break the impasse and make a move towards them . . . it was evident the Scouts had been seen taking up position . . . yet, if ZIPRA knew they were there, why was it taking them so long to open fire . . . the Scouts would be pinned down.

The radio crackled into life again . . . four Zambian Army trucks, packed with troops, were coming down the road fast . . . that was what ZIPRA had been waiting for!

It was a good time to move and, without any further hesitation, both Scouts got up and ran.

Some ragged smallarms fire was directed in their general direction by the ZIPRA terrorists, but the sudden move had taken them by surprise . . . the enemy had presumably assumed they were going to be sporting . . . and await the arrival and deployment of the Zambian Army before commencing battle!

Having dragged their heels for so long before coming in to mount a sweep of the area, it can safely be assumed the Zambians were suffering from a severe dose of nervous jitters . . . and . . . when firing started as they came into sight, they immediately jumped to an understandable, although wrong, conclusion . . . that they were being shot at.

A fierce battle boiled up between the ZIPRA terrorists and their Zambian allies . . . the ZIPRA terrorists, it is thought, assumed that as they were being fired at, the trucks must be a Rhodesian column.

Wally and Des took cover in a washaway about a hundred metres away from the central contact area . . . but they could do little else but keep their heads down . . . for, if they had made a run for it, they would have been seen and fired on by both sets of busily engaged combatants.

The situation was perfect for an air strike . . . particularly with the Zambian vehicles around . . . so Wally radioed for one and was told the Hawker Hunters were on their way.

Twenty minutes later, the mini battle between the Zambians and ZIPRA died down and it became apparent they had liaised with each other . . . possibly by radio . . . and discovered they were shooting at the wrong people . . . the evidence of this being some heavy bursts of heavy machinegun and supporting smallarms fire which kept the Scouts pinned down, although they were in good cover – but their safety couldn't last for long, not once the Zambians plucked up enough courage and ideas to flush them out.

Then . . . it seemed to have taken an age . . . although in reality it hadn't been more than twenty minutes, a section of Hawker Hunters swooped down, their rocket trails leading away towards the ground.

The Scouts were told afterwards by the pilots of the Hawker Hunters that they had achieved a highly satisfactory kill . . . and that both the ZIPRA and the Zambians, instead of taking cover, had either run or stayed near the trucks making superb targets.

With no one left to bar their way, Wally and Des rejoined the others and made their way across country to a pick-up point, where they were soon uplifted by helicopters.

A few weeks afterwards, Wally Insch was again deployed into Zambia with a twelve-man callsign, to check for ZIPRA movement from Zambia into the general area of Mana Pools. His callsign included *Buffalo Bill* Des, *Tap Tap* and an American, who was to gain the nick-name of *Automatic* Jim on this operation.

The callsign was first tasked to walk the area in Zambia opposite Mana Pools, but then to gradually move west up the Zambesi towards Chirundu.

As they progressed, they picked up considerable evidence indicating the presence of ZIPRA terrorists in the area, and on searching tribal villages, they came upon numerous weapons and arms caches, although, in those first few days of the patrol they had no contact with the enemy.

Wally split his callsign into two teams . . . working about five kilometres apart . . . to cover more ground.

In the villages near the river they discovered numerous inflatable dinghies of communist origin and a vast treasure of tinned Scottish salmon and medical supplies . . . all of which they destroyed, although a few helicopter-loads of Scottish salmon, a rarity in sanctions-torn Rhodesia, were picked up and transported back to Rhodesia. It was clear by the vast amount of ZIPRA stores left in the custody of Zambian villagers, that almost all of them sympathised or were actively helping or harbouring ZIPRA terrorists.

The callsign found untold thousands of weapons . . . far too many to be brought back to Rhodesia, although many tons were helicoptered out. The rest they just blew up . . . there was no other alternative.

The volume of ammunition and arms cached in this area of Zambia must have been astronomical, because in all the villages and in most of the tribal huts the Selous Scouts searched, there was invariably at least one item of rough furniture made from the timber of ammunition boxes.

Not once during this fighting patrol did the callsign have to call for an ammunition or arms re-supply . . . there was ample in Zambia just for the taking.

After being deployed for a few days, they began to experience fleeting contacts but they were never, at that stage, able to positively identify who they'd been in action against, although communist weapons were used, so it was most certainly ZIPRA.

Wally and his men had to be cunning, due to their small numbers, so they worked mostly at night to gain the benefit of surprise and to confuse the enemy. They were often moved from one area to the next by helicopter, to give the impression a greater number of groups were around.

Once, they discovered a ZIPRA base camp which was not occupied by terrorists at the time, although their packs and other things were neatly stacked up awaiting their return.

They stayed there in ambush for four days until the terrorists returned . . . but they came in very cautiously.

The Scouts opened fire and killed three . . . and *Automatic* Jim, who killed one with a long burst, got himself that nickname.

The terrorists must have sensed something was wrong when approaching . . . perhaps, because there were no birds around . . . which shows people ignore the warning signs of the bush, only at their peril.

The feed-back from radio intercepts, showed the enemy were convinced a whole company of Rhodesian troops were ranged against them.

Towards the end of their operations in Zambia, they were tasked to carry out a reconnaissance of a camp where a platoon of ZIPRA regulars were thought to be based up.

They took up an observation point and saw a few ZIPRA regulars walking on the road nearby the camp. They soon concluded there was nowhere near a platoon of the enemy there . . . only a few . . . and they made an ideal target for a surprise attack by Wally and his men.

Having decided, Wally planned to mount an attack at first light the next morning, but when he tried to raise Captain Andy Samuels at the forward base in Rhodesia to clear the attack, he couldn't raise him.

He tried continually during the night hours. Then, in the early hours, came the drone of a number of heavy transport aircraft . . . they were low and their black shapes were huge against the night sky.

The Selous Scouts . . . all twelve of them . . . looked at each other aghast. It could mean only one thing . . . the Zambians were flying in vast troop reinforcements . . . aircraft that size and in that number, could fly a whole battalion in.

Wally redoubled his efforts to raise Rhodesia . . . should the attack go in or not . . . had the Special Branch heard anything about large-scale Zambian troop reinforcements?

Then, an hour before first light he raised the forward base . . . the reception was appalling . . . yet the reply to his queries was unmistakable.

'Stop! . . . Stop! . . . Stop!'

So . . . the Zambians *were* sending heavy reinforcements in after all . . . it was time to run . . . he aborted the mission and they quickly left for the pick-up point.

Wally, being the callsign commander, was the last man to clamber aboard the helicopter . . . he didn't know it then, but it made him the last Rhodesian soldier to operate on Zambian soil.

Later, once back in Rhodesia, they discovered the aircraft they had heard overhead in Zambia, were not bringing in enemy reinforcements . . . they were the big Royal Air Force C-130 transports flying in the Commonwealth Monitoring Force, who were to supervise the events which were, ultimately, to lead up to the elections, as agreed at the Lancaster House conference . . . which was the first Wally and his men had heard of it . . . they'd been too busy to read the papers!

PART 10

The End
1979/1980

The situation in Rhodesia was crumbling. It had been crumbling visibly for at least a year, as the stink of political defeat . . . which in practical terms always pre-empts a military defeat . . . even though the formations in the field might be intact and undefeated . . . had begun to seep like blood-poisoning into the veins of the Security Forces – and, even more visibly, into the veins of Rhodesia itself.

People began to look inwards at each other . . . instead of at the enemy . . . perhaps it was easier . . . certainly situations where people face traumatic change or defeat always seem to germinate this attitude. Suddenly, that fine shoulder to shoulder face-the-world-together attitude that had made the Rhodesians as one . . . the same thing that had brought the British together when facing the perils of Nazi invasion during the Battle of Britain in 1940 . . . was fast disappearing.

We were a small country, less than three hundred thousand whites and seven million blacks, and nothing we could do or had done would satisfy the world as to the rightness of any of our actions. There had been a time when we'd been held up to the world as an example of fine race relations . . . an example to emulate, but now we were the pariahs – only black rule . . . not multi-racial checker-board rule – would satisfy our enemies . . . or even our friends.

As the draw-strings had begun to tighten, the politicians, certainly, had closed their ranks . . . anyone who was anyone in anything, had to be protected for the sake of the country. Why? God knows, but this became a fact of life.

Stories of corruption in high places being covered up were legion. Men facing prosecution under the Exchange Control Act, even though in prison, were protected by D-notices slapped on the Rhodesian Press, while strangely, if it were for security reasons, the rest of the world's media printed all the details. Everyone, even the Soviets and the Cubans, were able to read about it, but not the Rhodesians . . . which should make one think . . . it certainly made a lot of Rhodesians think.

With the new elections to bring in a moderate black Prime Minister in April, 1979, it had soon become frustratingly clear that the publicity boosted and highly polished mirror-image of Rhodesia's (called about this time Zimbabwe/Rhodesia) first black Prime Minister, Bishop Abel Muzorewa, did not exactly reflect a man totally sold on the conceptual ideas of western democracy . . . as had been the high and hasty hopes.

It was not long before he made a statement that whites, who had left Rhodesia, could only return if they paid ten thousand dollars in foreign currency as a re-entry fee, but black terrorists, he called them guerillas . . . could return to the country free . . . once they changed their politics and supported him.

Even the Selous Scouts who had initiated most of the kills during the long war, were not immune to this changing turmoil of inward looking attitudes.

In January, 1979, I discovered my direct telephone line had been bugged by Rhodesian Military Intelligence. It had been bugged while the bush-war was raging, because it was wrongly and ridiculously suspected the Selous Scouts were engaged in organised ivory poaching, and selling captured communist weapons on the world curio market.

Maybe tragically, the bugged line was the one on which I received all calls relating to our Zambian Spy Ring, relayed calls from Chris Grove, Anthony White and Michael Broadman – who was by then in a Zambian prison and who could, perhaps, have been put there by this grave security breach.

I demanded action against the officers responsible, but became convinced that in the particular atmosphere prevalent in Rhodesia at the time the matter was about to be covered up – whitewashed at a high level. No one in the Army at large knew what had happened, and certain people were determined no one ever would.

As formal channels were closed to me, I determined to make the facts, as I knew them, known to the Army at an officers-only cocktail party, where I addressed those present. I considered I had a duty to the Army to do so.

The unexpectedness of the contents of my address caused a wave of shock and consternation to my brother officers.

Two days afterwards, I was officially charged with being insubordinate to the Army Commander, General Hickman, in contravention of the Defence Act.

Then, before the Court Martial date, Lieutenant General Hickman, Commander of the Rhodesian Army, was unexpectedly placed on the retired list.

Eventually, as was my right as an officer, I laid formal charges against eight officers, including a very senior one, for breaching Selous Scouts' security and endangering the lives of three of my officers. I then received formal confirmatory notification in writing that the new Army Commander, General Maclean, had no intention of proceeding against the officers against whom I had laid charges.

Numerous people from top Government down through the top military hierarchy, either obliquely or directly attempted to persuade me to plead guilty, *'and get this nonsense over with so we can get on with the war,'* but I declined . . . I wanted to ensure the whole bugging affair was fully aired in court.

My Court Martial took place in June, 1979, and was to last five days. I was found guilty of insubordination.

Before sentence, the Judge Advocate General, Lieutenant Colonel J. P. Reed, made an unusual departure in his manner of address to the President and members of the Court Martial, regarding sentence.

'Mr. President and gentlemen,' he said, 'in whatever sentence you decide to impose will be reflected your reaction to and your assessment of this case overall. It will reflect to the Army as a whole and, perhaps beyond the Army, the considered opinion of a general Court Martial comprised of high ranking officers – the highest military tribunal in the land – as to this wholly disastrous affair.

While having regard to the tenets of military discipline your sentence will, I am confident, be the measure of your contempt and disgust towards this whole disgraceful bugging affair. But above all, it would demonstrate your condemnation of the outrageous irresponsibility displayed by those concerned in the bugging of the telephone of someone of Colonel Reid Daly's position as Commanding Officer of the Selous Scouts. You all know, far better than I do, the role and tasks carried out by this Unit. It is in my judgement, incredible to the point of being bizarre and grotesque that this 'phone should have been bugged on such a flimsy tenuous pretext, based only on rumour and suspicion, totally without any foundation of fact, particularly over something like poaching or ivory running, which seemed to be the main object of the ridiculous exercise, and which, when viewed against the back-drop of the war and the security situation overall, are, in my submission, mere trivialities.

The actual and potential prejudice to top security operations and the tragic consequences which could or may have resulted from the ill-conceived actions of those concerned, are, in my submission, quite mind-boggling.'

I was then sentenced . . . to a reprimand.

The general public, of course, never became aware of these remarks as the trial was held *in camera* because evidence relating to our Zambian spy ring, if published, would clearly have been prejudicial to the security of the country, which was fair enough. But then the Government placed a D notice on the press prohibiting publication of *any* details of my Court Martial at all.

To say I felt strongly about this was an understatement and, in efforts to bring those

responsible for placing the lives of my men in jeopardy to book, as the new Army Commander refused to take action, I instituted civil proceedings in the High Court of Rhodesia against seven members of the Army for invasion of privacy, and Bishop Muzorewa, the Prime Minister in his dual capacity as Minister of Defence. Eventually, two years afterwards, I was forced by the circumstances of no longer being resident in the country of my birth, into dropping the matter.

By August, 1979, knowing that while still a soldier there was little more I could do to ensure that justice was done, I resigned my commission, finally handing over command of the Selous Scouts on my retirement in November, 1979, to Lieutenant Colonel Pat Armstrong.

By that time, we in the Selous Scouts knew the Regiment was doomed, no matter what the outcome of the forthcoming independence elections might be.

Everyone, the terrorist organisations certainly and the British Government definitely, wished us disbanded. The mud which had been continually thrown at us had begun to stick . . . quite unjustifiably, but because no one in political authority in Rhodesia would defend us . . . and . . . we were not allowed by the Defence Act to defend ourselves.

Then, as soon as it was announced that Robert Mugabe and his ZANU had won the election which would make them the new Government of Zimbabwe, plans were made to bring all troops in the field back to Andre Rabie Barracks at Inkomo.

The Regiment immediately diminished in size as the Territorial Army members were sent home . . . never to be called up again . . . and as regular members on short term contracts, finished their time and departed.

The turned terrorists, who had fought so well for the Regiment and for Rhodesia, began to look nervously over their shoulders at the new order of things . . . where their one time friends who had become their enemies – were now in a position which could prove fatal to them . . . unless, and that was the burning question, the new spirit of reconciliation could be taken at face value. This of course, became even more a matter for conjecture, when a former turned terrorist was *detained by the ZANU PF High Command for his personal protection after he had been apprehended by the masses.*

Questions were asked in Parliament, the Director of Public Prosecutions said the detention would be *illegal,* but the Police declined to comment. This latter was surprising, as the Commissioner of Police, P K Allum, had firmly emphasized at the Lancaster House talks in 1979, that the British South Africa Police would be apolitical and loyal to the properly elected government of the time, and would maintain law and order without fear or favour. But apparently no order was made to effect the man's rescue . . . which, one would have thought, would have been just about the most apolitical stance that could have been taken.

And so . . . the man was abandoned as a matter of expediency and left at Grazeley farm near Goromonzi, where he was illegally detained and, where he was eventually, so it was said, unspeakably done to death.

There was an almost reverse rush of senior Army officers to stay well away from the Selous Scouts . . . apparently in case they became tainted by association.

Then, the order came down from Army Headquarters, that all members of the Selous Scouts would forthwith cease wearing their Regimental cap badges . . . and would put up instead, the cap badges they had worn before becoming Selous Scouts.

Those who'd been Rhodesian Light Infantry, were to wear the RLI badge, those who'd been in the Special Air Service, were to put up the SAS badge, and those who'd been in the Rhodesian African Rifles, to badge themselves RAR. Those who'd never been in any other regiment suddenly found that they were no longer of the Selous Scouts – but, according to the badge given to them to wear, they were Rhodesian African Rifles.

And so suddenly . . . by the stroke of a pen, or was it by a telephone call . . . without benefit of formal disbandment or a parade where we could honourably lay up our standard in the Salisbury Cathedral . . . without any public acknowledgement from any political or military figure of the old Rhodesian order of things, that we had done well . . . and deserved well of our country . . . the

Selous Scouts Regiment, which had been feared more than any other by our former enemies in whose ranks we had wreaked such devastation . . . ceased to exist.

But, we had not really gone . . . like the old soldier of the song, we didn't die either . . . we merely faded away, but what never faded and will never fade, are the incredible, often lonely, but always bold achievements of the Selous Scouts . . . and . . . any man who served, when asked in the future what he did during the Rhodesian war, will be able to answer proudly.

'I,' he will say, 'was a Selous Scout.'

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Most of the information in this book has come from the personal knowledge and experiences of Lt. Col. Ron Reid Daly who, as the former founding commander of the Selous Scouts, was the only person who had an overall knowledge of what was going on. But other rich sources of information, without which this book would not be the definitive account that it is, came from taped interviews with former Selous Scouts, former members of the BSAP Special Branch and other former members of various units of the Rhodesian Security Forces, who were able to supply detailed accounts of actions from an *I was there* point of view. In addition, a vast treasure of unpublished documents in the way of plans, operational orders, logs, telephone and radio messages, debrief reports, intelligence reports, intelligence reviews, battle maps, photograph albums, scrap books, *home* movies, medal citations and other documents were made available to the writer by a large number of people.

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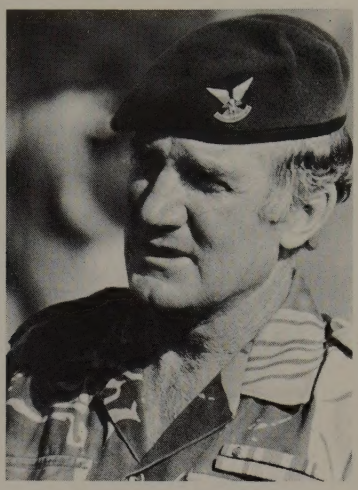
The founding commander of the Selous Scouts:



Rhodesian-born, Lt. Col. Ron Reid Daly first became a soldier in 1951 when he volunteered to fight with "C" (Rhodesia) Squadron of the British SAS, newly reformed to combat communist insurgency in Malaya. Afterwards, he worked his way up through the ranks in the Rhodesian Army from trooper to become the Regimental Sergeant Major of the Rhodesian Light Infantry, at which time he was commissioned. In 1973, when a Captain, he resigned his commission, to retire on pension, but was persuaded by General Walls, the then Commander of the Rhodesian Army and later the commander Combined Operations, to stay on and form the Selous Scouts, a Special Force unit which was desperately needed to join in the fight against communist-backed terrorist insurgents.

A highly successful Commanding Officer of a magnificently successful and effective Special Force fighting Regiment, Lieutenant Col. Reid Daly finally retired from the Rhodesian Army in November, 1979, just prior to the war's end.

Now a Major-General, he commands the Defence Force of the Transkei, an independent black-ruled African state.

The writer

British-born Peter Stiff, a full-time author, whose first book in 1973, *The Rain Goddess* was responsible for the public first becoming aware of the bitter intensity of the war being fought in the Rhodesian bush, has authored four important books. He lived in Rhodesia for twenty-eight years, twenty of them as a regular Policeman in the British South Africa Police from which he retired as a Superintendent in 1972.

One newspaper reviewer once said of him ". . . he knows the area (Rhodesia) and its people with an intimacy that leaves the ordinary observer trailing far behind him . . ." After reading his latest book, the breath-taking history of the formerly Top Secret classified Selous Scouts, certainly the most important book that will ever come out of the Rhodesian war, countless thousands more people will wholeheartedly echo those sentiments.

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Selous Scouts
Top Secret War

Lt. Col. Ron Reid Daly
as told to Peter Stiff